

## **NORTH WALES FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY**

Minutes of the meeting of North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority held on Monday 14 December 2015 at Flintshire County Council Chamber, Shire Hall, Mold. Meeting commenced at 10.30am.

### **PRESENT**

#### **Councillor**

M LI Davies (Chair)  
P R Lewis (Deputy Chair)  
A I Dunbar  
B Dunn  
A Evans  
H McGuill  
G Lowe  
D MacRae  
D J Miles  
W R Owen  
R E Parry  
M A Reece  
W P Shotton  
D Taylor

#### **Representing**

Denbighshire County Council  
Conwy County Borough Council  
Flintshire County Council  
Flintshire County Council  
Wrexham County Borough Council  
Flintshire County Council  
Wrexham County Borough Council  
Conwy County Borough Council  
Conwy County Borough Council  
Gwynedd Council  
Conwy County Borough Council  
Flintshire County Council  
Flintshire County Council  
Wrexham County Borough Council

### **Also present:**

S A Smith (Chief Fire Officer and Chief Executive); K W Finch (Treasurer to the Authority); C Everett (Clerk and Monitoring Officer); D Docx (Deputy Chief Fire Officer); R Simmons and R Fairhead (Assistant Chief Fire Officers); G W Griffiths (Training and Development Manager); G Brandrick (Professional and Service Standards Manager); K Roberts (Senior Operations Manager); S Millington (Senior Fire Safety Manager); S Forrest (Accountant, Treasurer's Department, Conwy County Borough Council); S Morris (Corporate Planning Manager); S Roberts (Head of Facilities); T Williams (Corporate Communications Manager); A Davies (Member Liaison Officer) and S Jones (Member Liaison Assistant).

### **APOLOGIES**

#### **Councillor**

L W Davies  
R Davies  
T A Edwards  
J G Evans  
R O Jones  
P W Owen  
W T Owen  
D Simmons  
A Tansley  
W O Thomas  
G Williams

#### **Representing**

Anglesey County Council  
Denbighshire County Council  
Wrexham County Borough Council  
Anglesey County Council  
Anglesey County Council  
Denbighshire County Council  
Gwynedd Council  
Denbighshire County Council  
Conwy County Borough Council  
Flintshire County Council  
Gwynedd Council

Before formally opening the meeting, the Chair paid tribute to Cllr Bob Wright from Cyngor Gwynedd who sadly passed away in September. The Chair had attended the funeral together with the CFO and the DCFO. All those present observed a minute's silence.

## 1 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

1.1 The Treasurer declared an interest in agenda item 9 - Annual Review of Treasurer's Statutory Appointment and Service Level Agreement.

## 2 MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 21 SEPTEMBER 2015

2.1 The minutes of the Fire and Rescue Authority meeting held on 21 September 2015 were submitted for approval.

2.2 **RESOLVED to approve the minutes as a true and correct record.**

## 3 MATTERS ARISING

3.1 There were no matters arising.

## 4 URGENT MATTERS

4.1 The CFO informed Members that an elderly gentleman had sadly passed away on Friday 11 December following a fire at his home in Caernarfon two weeks earlier. The cause of death will be determined by the Coroner at a later date.

## 5 CHAIR'S REPORT

5.1 The report listed meetings and events attended by Cllr M Ll Davies and Cllr P R Lewis in their roles of Chair and Deputy Chair of North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority between September and December 2015.

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

## 6 FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY BUDGET 2016-17

6.1 The CFO introduced the report on the FRA's budget for 2016-17 which updated Members as to the progress in developing the draft budget for 2016-17.

6.2 The Welsh Government had issued its draft budget on 8 December and the provisional local government settlement was published on 9 December. Due to these late publication dates, an extraordinary meeting of the Authority will be held on 25 January 2016 to agree the budget in detail.

6.3 The Minister had sent a letter to the Chair about the proposed implications of the budget reductions for fire and rescue authorities. The CFO read extracts of the letter to Members and various issues were discussed as noted below.

- 6.4 Firelink – Members are aware that the current system will be in place until the new communication system is introduced in 2019. The Minister confirmed that funding has been protected for 2016-17 as he recognises that it is 'critical to effective operations', however, he could not confirm whether funding support will be available in 2017-18 and beyond. It was also noted that the Minister is unable to make a similar commitment as regards the replacement system and is encouraging the FRA to bid for invest-to-save funding.
- 6.5 Community safety revenue funding will be reduced by 20%, with a total of £818k being available across Wales in 2016-17. This will inevitably mean reducing community safety programmes and further details on NWFRAs bid for the funding available will be provided to Members at the extraordinary meeting in January.
- 6.6 Concerns were expressed that the Minister is expecting the fire and rescue authorities to mainstream all the community safety work currently undertaken; Members considered that this work has been done in collaboration with the Welsh Government to date and that it is part of the Welsh Government's agenda in keeping people safe in the community and would not be possible without the grant funding. Members asked that the Chair and CFO write to the Minister highlighting these issues.
- 6.7 Through presentations at the Executive Panel and the Audit Committee meetings, all Members were aware of the financial pressures facing the Authority in 2016-17 and extensive discussions were had about how to close the budget gap of £1.3 million. The Executive Panel had recommended that the Authority construct its budget on the basis of the current level of service provision and should consider underpinning the 2016-17 budget with funding taken from general reserves. The Treasurer again reminded Members of the significant risk to the Authority in using the general reserves, however, he also considered that the risk needed to be taken in order to improve services in the future.
- 6.8 In order to save some money, Cllr Reece proposed that all agendas and reports be sent out electronically rather than in paper format and it was agreed to email reports to those Members who are able to access files electronically.
- 6.9 **RESOLVED to**
- (i) **send a letter to the Minister outlining Members' concerns about the community safety grant funding;**
  - (ii) **note the challenges around setting a balanced budget for 2016-17;**
  - (ii) **confirm that the 2016-17 budget be constructed on the basis of the current level of service provision;**
  - (iii) **accept the recommendations of the Executive Panel that the Authority considers underpinning the 2016-17 budget with funding taken from the general reserves, taking into account the substantial risks that it then creates for subsequent years.**

10 PROVISIONAL OUTTURN 2015-2016

- 10.1 The Treasurer introduced the report which gave an estimated provisional outturn for the financial year 2015-16.
- 10.2 The Treasurer highlighted that at the time of writing the report the estimated underspend was £35k, however, the recent flooding incidents are likely to have an impact on this figure. It was also noted that the original budget included a contribution from reserves of £223k. Due to the overall position it will not be a requirement at this time to use that reserve.
- 10.3 Members noted that it is estimated that capital spend on the light vehicle replacement programme and the purchase of equipment for Fleet will be overspent against budget. In order to reduce costs in future years these additional costs will be met from a contribution from revenue.
- 10.4 Members asked questions about the apprenticeship scheme, the cleaning of Service premises and the new co-responding pilot scheme. The CFO reminded Members that the co-responding scheme will be trialled across eight areas in North Wales and the Authority will be seeking to recover the set-up costs from the WAST. Members were also informed of the insurance and the training implications. Cllr Lowe considered this to be a positive step forward and thanked officers for their work.
- 10.5 **RESOLVED to note the minor underspend and the information as set out in the report.**

11 ANNUAL REVIEW OF TREASURER'S STATUTORY APPOINTMENT AND SERVICE LEVEL AGREEMENT

Ken Finch and Dawn Docx left the room whilst this item was discussed.

- 11.1 The Clerk presented the report which informed Members of the need for a review to be undertaken into the service level agreement for the provision of a Treasurer to the Fire and Rescue Authority and the proposed arrangements for an appointment to that statutory post.
- 11.2 The Authority has service level agreements with Conwy County Borough Council for the provision of general legal services, financial services and for the statutory appointment of Treasurer to the Fire and Rescue Authority. Mr Finch is due to retire in January 2016 and Conwy CBC has indicated that it will no longer be in a position to provide a Treasurer with its current level of resources and personnel. Therefore, the Authority will need to advertise the role and undertake a competitive process to recruit a Treasurer in the new financial year. Whilst this process takes place, it is proposed that the Deputy Chief Fire Officer, Dawn Docx, takes on the role of the Treasurer which will incur an additional payment of £597 per month, which is the pro rata fee for the Treasurer.
- 11.3 It was noted that the Authority will also need to confirm with Conwy County Borough Council that one of its officers (currently Sandra Forrest) will continue to be an accountable officer in support of the S151 role, as the SLA for financial services will remain in place. This would strengthen the relationship, mitigate risk and assist in corporate and financial governance.

11.4 **RESOLVED to**

- (i) **note the content of the report and approve a review of the SLA for Treasurer to the Authority;**
- (ii) **approve the interim arrangements and the appointment process, as outlined above;**
- (iii) **agree that the selection process will be as per the format for other senior roles in the Authority.**

12 MEETING DATES 2016

12.1 The report was presented to inform Members of the dates for meetings of the Fire and Rescue Authority, Executive Panel and Audit Committee for 2016.

12.2 It was noted that Cllr P Lewis has been asked to chair the Executive Panel meeting on 9 May and he requested that the meeting start at 2pm; this was agreed by Members.

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

**Fire and Rescue Authority meetings**

Monday 25 January 2016 – Conwy (extraordinary meeting)

Monday 21 March 2016 – Ynys Môn

Monday 20 June 2016 - Conwy

Monday 19 September 2016 – Denbighshire

Monday 19 December 2016 – Flintshire

**Executive Panel meetings to be held 10am at Fire and Rescue Headquarters**

Monday 8 February 2016

Monday 9 May 2016 (\*2pm start)

Monday 18 July 2016

Monday 24 October 2016

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

Monday 25 January 2016

Monday 6 June 2016

Monday 12 September 2016.

PART II

13 CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2015-16

13.1 The report provided Members with an update on the North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority's estate capital programme.

13.2 Members were given the opportunity to ask questions about the information contained in the report and thereafter it was **RESOLVED to note the contents of the report.**