

NORTH WALES FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY

Minutes of the meeting of North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority held on Monday 15th March 2010 at Siambur Dafydd Orwig Chamber, Gwynedd Council, Caernarfon. Meeting commenced at 10.30am.

PRESENT

Councillor	Representing
S Frobisher (Chair)	Denbighshire County Council
A M Jones (Vice-Chair)	Anglesey County Council
L W Davies	Anglesey County Council
R M Davies	Wrexham County Borough Council
B Dunn	Flintshire County Council
G C Evans	Denbighshire County Council
E C George	Wrexham County Borough Council
M Griffith	Gwynedd Council
N M Jones	Flintshire County Council
D Mackie	Flintshire County Council
A Minshull	Flintshire County Council
J V Owen	Anglesey County Council
W T Owen	Gwynedd 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); G W Griffiths (Senior Operations Manager); G Brandrick (Training and Development Manager); S Morris (Corporate Planning Manager); T Williams (Corporate Communications Manager); J Brown (Finance Manager); S Forrest (Accountant, Treasurer's Department, Conwy County Borough Council); G Jones (Executive Support Manager); A Davies (Member Liaison Officer) and S Jones (Member Liaison Assistant).

APOLOGIES

Councillor	Representing
D Barratt	Flintshire County Council
B Blackmore	Wrexham County Borough Council
M LI Davies	Denbighshire County Council
P C Evans	Conwy County Borough Council
T Evans	Wrexham County Borough Council
G James	Flintshire County Council
P Jeffares	Wrexham County Borough Council
E M Jones	Gwynedd Council
W Knightly	Conwy County Borough Council

At the beginning of the meeting, the Chair presented flowers to Margaret Shields, Secretary to the Principal Officers, who was retiring after nearly 25 years with the Service. The Chief Fire Officer spoke of Margaret's commitment to the Service and on behalf of the Authority and officers wished her well in her retirement.

1 NOTICE OF URGENT MATTERS

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

2 DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

2.1 There were no declarations of interests.

3 MINUTES

3.1 The minutes of the Fire and Rescue Authority meeting held on 21st December 2009 were submitted for approval.

3.2 **RESOLVED to approve 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 December 2009 and February 2010.

5.2 The Chair informed Members that she had attended an all-Wales YFA competition held at Loggerheads, Denbighshire on 7th March. Approximately 130 young people had taken part and overall the North Wales branches had won the top three places in all three competitions, with Llanfairfechan YFA being crowned the overall winners.

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

6 APPOINTMENT OF ASSISTANT CHIEF FIRE OFFICER

6.1 At its December meeting, the Authority had discussed the principal officers' pay review and agreed that the ACFO post should be filled on a permanent basis. The recruitment process was completed on 11th March when the Appointments Panel interviewed two candidates.

6.2 The Chief Fire Officer informed Members that Ruth Simmons had been appointed as the Assistant Chief Fire Officer post responsible for Human Resources and organisational development with effect from 1st April.

- 7 SERVICE INSPECTION BY THE HEALTH AND SAFETY EXECUTIVE (HSE)
- 7.1 The report was presented to inform Members about the findings of the HSE following the inspection of North Wales Fire and Rescue Service.
- 7.2 The Chief Fire Officer reminded Members that the Service had been chosen as one of the eight Fire and Rescue Services to be inspected across the UK. The report from the HSE compared extremely favourably with some of the other Services inspected.
- 7.3 ACFO Claydon led Members through the document and circulated a HSG65 diagram which showed the overall framework used by the HSE. Four recommendations had been made and an action plan will be produced shortly and reviewed with the HSE to determine appropriate timescales. The report will be shared with Services across the UK and will be sent to representative bodies to enable the Service and representative bodies to work together to deal with the recommendations.
- 7.4 In response to a Member's question it was confirmed that the HSE will review and ensure the actions are completed from the action plan and is likely to return in future to look at other areas of the Service.
- 7.5 Cllr M Griffith asked for it be noted that the Authority was disappointed that the Welsh version of the report was unavailable. The Chief Fire Officer shared Cllr Griffith's concerns and it was noted that the Welsh version would be circulated as soon as it was received.
- 7.6 Cllr G C Evans asked if there was a weakness in communicating with officers on the ground and whether this caused a problem. ACFO Claydon explained that informal consultations are held with officers in addition to formal consultation through the representative bodies and these procedures work well and are very robust. Officers are also welcome to contact the Principal Officers directly if they have any issues of concern.
- 7.7 **RESOLVED to note**
- (i) **the information contained within the HSE report; and**
 - (ii) **that update on progress with the action plan will be reported to the Authority once agreed with the HSE.**
- 8 PRUDENTIAL INDICATORS, TREASURY MANAGEMENT STRATEGY, INVESTMENT STRATEGY AND MINIMUM REVENUE PROVISION POLICY
- 8.1 The report was presented to ask Members to approve the Prudential Indicators, Treasury Management Strategy, Investment Strategy, Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) Policy and the Budget in Best Value format for 2010/11.
- 8.2 Members were also informed about the required changes to the Financial Regulations in order to comply with the changes to the CIPFA Treasury Management Code of Practice.

8.3 The Audit Committee had met on 1st March 2010 and received training on the treasury management and thereafter discussed the report in detail. Cllr M Griffith who had chaired the meeting confirmed that the Committee had no major observations nor could find any major risks in the report and would recommend it be approved by the Authority. However, Members did express concern over the sustainability of the revenue costs of capital for future years and suggested that for future budget setting exercises this area be looked at more closely.

8.4 The Treasurer reiterated Cllr Griffith's comments and advised that future capital requirements need to be looked at in further detail in the next budget setting round.

8.5 **RESOLVED to approve the following:**

- (i) **Prudential Indicators;**
- (ii) **Treasury Management Strategy for 2010/2011;**
- (iii) **Investment Strategy;**
- (iv) **Minimum Revenue Provision Policy;**
- (v) **Revision to the Fire Authority's Financial Regulations.**

8.6 **Members also noted the concerns expressed by the Audit Committee.**

9 PROVISIONAL OUTTURN 2009-10

9.1 The report was presented to inform Members of the estimated provisional outturn for the financial year 2009-10. Current indications are that there will be a small overspend of £3,477.

9.2 The Treasurer informed Members that the staffing expenditure is projected to be lower than anticipated because the pay award for 2009-10 was at a lower level than originally projected.

9.3 The overspend was due to:

- pensions costs – two firefighters have retired on ill-health grounds which is a charge to the revenue account;
- maintenance costs - due to electrical testing being undertaken for health and safety reasons;
- trade waste cost.

9.4 **RESOLVED to note the estimated overspend.**

10 LOCAL GOVERNMENT MEASURE - BRIEFING FOR MEMBERS

10.1 Rob Powell from the Wales Audit Office gave Members a presentation about the Local Government Measure. The Measure repeals and replaces most of the Local Government Act 1999 (best value) and parts of the Local Government Act 2000 (community strategies). It comprises two parts with a clear and deliberate link between them – service improvement and community planning. Audit and inspection is only applicable to service improvement.

- 10.2 The key factors of the Measure are the focus on communities, coherence and realism. The transitional phase in implementing the Measure started in November 2009 and will run until March 2011. Workshops have been held with senior officers of all three Fire and Rescue Services in Wales.
- 10.3 In terms of the Fire and Rescue Authorities, the Measure will provide an opportunity to:
- review and ensure key links with community planning partners;
 - have effective collaboration with partners;
 - have a citizen-focused approach to setting improvement objectives;
 - allocate funding to supporting achievement of improvement objectives;
 - revise objectives and funding in light of the scrutiny and monitoring arrangements; and
 - report on what has been achieved for members of the public.
- 10.4 The Wales Audit Office has allocated officers to each council in Wales as well as the Welsh Fire and Rescue Authorities, NHS Trusts and the Ambulance Service. The WAO officers allocated for North Wales will work together to ensure an accumulative knowledge of the region and to focus activity as economically as possible. It was noted that there will be a much bigger emphasis on collaborative working. The WAO will continue to work with KPMG on performance knowledge of the North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority.
- 10.5 The Clerk commented that in preparation for the Auditor General Wales' retrospective assessment of the Authority's performance (in November 2010), the Authority should have the opportunity to conduct a self-assessment of its performance.
- 10.6 **RESOLVED to note the information provided.**
- 11 REGULATORY PROGRAMME FOR PERFORMANCE AUDIT NOVEMBER 2009 TO MARCH 2011
- 11.1 Rob Powell presented the programme for performance audit to be delivered by and on behalf of the Auditor General for Wales. The implementation of the Local Government Measure means that the performance and finance aspects have to be separated.
- 11.2 Due to the transitional arrangements for the Local Government Measure the performance programme covers a 17-month period. The performance audit work will reflect the Authority's improvement planning arrangements, be aligned to its improvement objectives and will be tailored accordingly.
- 11.3 The fee for the 17-month period is £40,991 which includes an uplift fee of 1.7% which is in line with the standard increase across Local Government.
- 11.4 **RESOLVED to note the information provided.**

This was Rob Powell's last meeting with the Authority as he was leaving the Wales Audit Office. The Chair thanked him for his work over the past few years and wished him well for the future.

12 FINANCIAL AUDIT STRATEGY

- 12.1 Joanne West from KPMG presented the strategy on behalf of KPMG and the Wales Audit Office. The strategy sets out the work to be undertaken by the Appointed Auditor under the Public Audit (Wales) Act 2004. The appointed Auditor for the Authority is Anthony Barrett (WAO) and he will be supported by Gilbert Lloyd from KPMG.
- 12.2 The Strategy controls the environment within which the Fire and Rescue Authority operates. As part of the duties, the Appointed Auditor is required to examine and certify the accounts as well as ensure the Authority has made proper arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources.
- 12.3 The Authority will move to accounting under International Financial Reporting Standards from year ending 31st March 2011; although this will mean additional work for the finance team the Treasurer confirmed that he did not anticipate that additional resources would be needed. Under the new regulations, the Authority will have to update its figures to ensure they are compliant with IFRS and more lengthy disclosures will be needed. The work currently being done will give an indication of how much work there will be for the Authority.
- 12.4 The proposed fee for the work is £26,400 plus VAT. This includes a 1.7% increase which is in line with standard increase across local government. It is likely that there will be an increase in the fee to cover the additional work that auditors will have to do.
- 12.5 The Treasurer confirmed that he was due to attend a meeting of the Partnership Board (Chief Executives from North Wales' local authorities) and would ask for an IFRS update from each local authority.
- 12.6 **RESOLVED to note the information provided and that progress reports would be provided to future Authority meetings.**

13 SPECIAL APPLIANCE REVIEW

- 13.1 The report was presented to inform Members of the progress made following the Authority's decision in 2006-07 to review the type, disposition and effectiveness of the range of Special Appliances operated by the Service.
- 13.2 The Senior Operations Manager explained how the various special appliances had been used in various incidents. The special rescue unit had been used at an incident in Penmachno where firefighters had worked with other agencies to rescue people from canoes on the river. Also an incident had taken place the night before the Authority meeting where the animal rescue equipment had been used to rescue lambs that were stuck in a pipe.
- 13.3 A project team was working on converting an emergency tender, no longer in use, into a Welfare Unit. It will be mobilised to a range of incident types and durations to ensure that operational staff have sufficient changing, toilet

and washing facilities. This provision will enhance the arrangements for staff health and welfare.

- 13.4 The specialist equipment is used on a regular basis and the operational benefits realised as a result of the Special Appliance Review and subsequent investment are significant. The Review has positioned the Authority in a way in which the challenges of an increasingly changing and demanding operational environment can be met with assurance.
- 13.5 It was also noted that one of the aerial ladder platforms was coming to the end of its life and that the issue will be discussed at the Executive Panel meeting in May.
- 13.6 **RESOLVED to note the progress made with the Special Appliance Review.**

14 DEVELOPMENT OF RISK REDUCTION OBJECTIVES

- 14.1 The purpose of the report was to seek the Authority's approval to proceed with the development of risk reduction objectives under three specific headings in 2011-12 and beyond.
- 14.2 The Deputy Chief Fire Officer explained that the Combined Risk Reduction and Improvement Plan will look at past performance, current year objectives and future objectives. The Risk Reduction Planning Working Group had met five times since November and reviewed the responses received to the 2009 consultation and discussed the risk reduction objectives for future plans.
- 14.3 The RRP working group had drawn up position statements in relation to the 2009 consultation topics - working with young people, the retained duty system and co-responding. The position statements were attached to the report submitted to the Authority.
- 14.4 There was also an update regarding working with young people. The Chief Fire Officer had been tasked with running a task and finish group to develop a children and young people fire and rescue strategy for the whole of Wales. The final report was yet to receive approval from the Assembly. The Chief Fire Officer confirmed that the Phoenix course was considered to be the flagship project that should be continued and there are indications from the Assembly that the project will receive financial support.
- 14.5 The Authority's Aerial Ladder Platform (ALPs) attendance standard has also been considered by the RRP working group, and the Executive Panel will discuss ALPs in more detail at its May meeting.
- 14.6 The Assembly was conducting a review of the Retained Duty System which is chaired by the Fire and Rescue Advisor. ACFO Simmons represents the Authority on that review board.
- 14.7 Approval was sought from the full Authority to proceed to develop draft risk reduction objectives that will form the basis of next summer's 12-week public consultation. The specific risk reduction objectives that are being developed for 2011-12 and beyond relate to:

- Sustainability
- Equality and Diversity
- Business Continuity Management.

- 14.8 **RESOLVED to:**
- (i) **note the progress made to date;**
 - (ii) **note the position statements;**
 - (iii) **approve the development of risk reduction objectives relating to sustainability, equality and diversity and business continuity management.**

15 REVIEW OF THE COMPLAINTS POLICY OF THE AUTHORITY

- 15.1 The Clerk explained that the complaints policy of the Authority needed to be reviewed. The Public Services Ombudsman is pre-consulting on a new model complaints policy for recommendation for adoption by local authorities and public bodies. The model will be published for formal consultation shortly. The Authority was recommended to review and update its policy in line with the model policy of the Ombudsman when it becomes available.

- 15.2 **RESOLVED to agree that a review of the complaints policy be commissioned and charge the Standards Committee with responsibility for undertaking the review, and submit a report to Authority at a later date.**

16 THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE'S ANNUAL REPORT TO THE FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY

- 16.1 As a matter of good corporate governance the Standards Committee provides the Fire and Rescue Authority with an annual report on its activities during each financial year.

- 16.2 Members, past and present, had raised some issues (correspondence was circulated at the Authority meeting) at the Standards Committee meeting as follows:

- concern that the Authority had not formally ratified the appointments of two new independent members based on the recommendations of the panel appointed. The Authority was asked to ratify the decision of the appointments panel that had interviewed the candidates.
- disappointment that the Authority had decided not to remunerate independent members – the Clerk encouraged the Authority to review its decision at the annual meeting in June.

- 16.3 The Clerk explained that the Standards Committee members had expressed a wish to have a wider remit. The Committee was due to meet again to look at possible areas of work.

- 16.4 **RESOLVED to**
- (i) **formally confirm the appointments of Celia Blomeley and Jane A Eyton-Jones as independent members of the Standards Committee for a period of four years from January 2010-December 2013;**

- (ii) **reconsider remunerating independent members at the Authority's annual meeting;**
- (iii) **note the report and endorse a proactive and extended role for the Committee.**

17 CONSULTATION ON POLITICAL STRUCTURES BY WELSH ASSEMBLY GOVERNMENT

- 17.1 The report was presented to ask the Authority to note the consultation paper on scrutiny and political structures in Local Government issued by the Assembly.
- 17.2 The Clerk advised that the Authority's response to WAG should state that ministerial powers of intervention should only be used in extreme cases and as a last resort and according to clear protocol. The Authority was further advised to respond that it will co-operate with other public bodies, such as unitary authorities, in effective scrutiny and community involvement provided arrangements are manageable and proportionate.
- 17.3 **RESOLVED to note the contents of the consultation document and agree that the Clerk provides a response to the Welsh Assembly Government on behalf of the Authority.**

18 PILOT FIRE SAFETY STRUCTURE

- 18.1 The report was presented to inform Members about the pilot for a new Fire Safety Structure that will be implemented on 5th April 2010.
- 18.2 The Deputy Chief Fire Officer explained that the Fire Safety function has two main strands, Legislative and Community. The pilot will mean reconfiguring the officers that are already working in those areas to enable them to work more flexibly and deliver a better service.
- 18.3 **RESOLVED to note that the Service is running a Pilot Fire Safety Structure across North Wales which will be evaluated and the results communicated to Members.**

19 MINUTES OF MEETINGS

- 19.1 The unconfirmed minutes of the following meetings were presented for information to the Authority:
 - Executive Panel meeting held on 1st February 2010
 - Standards Committee meeting held on 18th February 2010
- 19.2 **RESOLVED to note the unconfirmed minutes.**

20 INFORMATIVE

- 20.1 ACFO Hanks presented the Informative to the Authority in its new format. He explained that there was an additional start-up cost of £900 for the new format but that the overall cost of its production would be £600 less per year.

20.2 **RESOLVED to accept the Informative magazine.**

PART II

21 OPERATIONAL MANAGER PROVISION

21.1 ACFO Claydon presented the report which provided Members with information in relation to the ongoing development of a dedicated operational manager provision in North Wales Fire and Rescue Service and the potential costs.

21.2 In March 2008 the Authority agreed that an Operational Manager Provision Review examining the way the Service provides supervisory cover by middle and senior managers at emergency incidents should be undertaken as part of the Risk Reduction Plan (RRP) for 2009/10.

21.3 The intention of the review was to look at the viability of a 'dedicated response option' that would improve operational assurance at incidents and the efficiency of the Service.

21.4 ACFO Claydon explained that nobody would be transferred from Grey Book terms and conditions to the Green Book terms and conditions and that it was not a cost-saving exercise. It was confirmed that there would be considerable consultation with representative bodies prior to any changes being made.

21.5 **RESOLVED to:**

- (i) note the information provided; and**
- (ii) receive periodic reports on progress with the proposals and updated costs.**