

NORTH WALES FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY

Minutes of the meeting of North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority held on Monday 19th December 2005 at the Council Chamber, County Hall, Ruthin. Meeting commenced at 10.30am.

Present:

Councillor

Representing

T Roberts (Chairman)
M Williams (Vice-Chairman)

Gwynedd Council
Wrexham County Borough Council

P C Evans JP
W E Jones
R D Peacock
J Vaughan
G C Evans
S Frobisher
J A Smith
D Barratt
D Clayton
E F Evans
C Shone
G O Williams
N S Colbourne
G M Craddock
E C George
P M Shone
W J Chorlton
J A Roberts
W T Roberts

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

Also present:

S A Smith (Chief Fire Officer and Chief Executive); I R Miller (Clerk and Monitoring Officer to the Authority); K W Finch (Treasurer to the Authority); C Enness (Deputy Chief Fire Officer); C Hanks (Assistant Chief Fire Officer, Service Support); P S Claydon (Assistant Chief Fire Officer, Service Delivery); P L Slee (Assistant Chief Officer, Corporate Services), S Morris (Corporate Planning Manager); S Forrest (Treasurer's Department, Conwy County Borough Council); W A Murphy (Senior Operations Manager); K Hughes (Senior Development Manager); D G Roberts (Senior Fire Safety Manager); T White (IT Analyst) and Rh Evans (Member Liaison Officer).

PART I

1) Apologies

Councillor

S C Jones
J A MacLennan (substitute)
D Jones MBE
R G Hampson
J Ovens
E Morgan Jones
M Griffith
W T Owen

Representing

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

Prior to the commencement of business Councillor J A Smith, in his capacity as Chairman of Denbighshire County Council, welcomed the Fire and Rescue Authority to County Hall.

2) Notice of Urgent Matters

The Chairman advised that one item had been submitted for consideration: a draft response to the Welsh Assembly Government's (WAG) letter of consultation on the "Service Standards for attendance to fires in the home". Members were informed that the Minister's letter and the draft response, both of which had been distributed at the meeting, would be discussed under business item 16.

3) Announcements

The Chairman announced that:

- i. Councillor S C Jones was now being cared for at Ysbyty Glan Clwyd. The Authority was informed that she would very much appreciate receiving letters from fellow members and the Chairman undertook to visit her as soon as she was allowed visitors.
- ii. Condolences were extended to Councillor N S Colbourne following the recent death of his mother.
- iii. Congratulations were extended to Bethan Davies, the Service's Press and Public Relations Officer, on her recent marriage to Mr Stuart Millington.
- iv. Best wishes were extended to Councillor P C Evans who was due to retire from his employment with Welsh Water at the end of the year.
- v. Dates of future committee meetings: a date for the next IRMP Working Group and Executive Panel meetings would be set under business item 7 on the current meeting's agenda.

- vi. Walesfire 2006 Conference: the Authority was reminded that this conference was being held at Llandudno between 8th and 10th May 2006. Members were requested to return their delegate registration forms via the Service's Headquarters in order that their delegate fees could be paid at source.

It was:

Resolved: - *that a letter be sent to Councillor S C Jones conveying the Authority's best wishes to her for a full and speedy recovery.*

Following the recent publication of an article in a local paper which contained inaccurate information, members were requested by the Chairman to seek his and/or officers' advice before offering comments to any press or media enquiries which were of a contentious nature.

4) Minutes

The following minutes were submitted:

- i. Fire and Rescue Authority meeting held on 19th September 2005

Resolved: - *to approve the minutes as a true and correct record of proceedings.*

The following minutes were submitted for information purposes:

- ii. Standards Committee meeting held on 10th October 2005
- iii. Executive Panel meeting held on 26th October 2005

5) Matters Arising

The following matters arose from the minutes submitted:

Page 2, Tragedy: members were informed by the Chief Fire Officer that it was with regret that he had to inform them of a fire death that had occurred on the eve of an Authority meeting. The tragedy occurred at Eglwysbach.

Page 4, Matters Arising, The Relationship between the Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA) and the Fire and Rescue Services in Wales: the Chief Fire Officer informed the Authority that the WLGA's response to the Authority's representations regarding the establishment of the Association's Wales Fire Services' Panel had been disappointing. At the inaugural meeting of the Panel, which due to the adverse weather conditions the Chairs of both North Wales and Mid and West Wales fire and rescue authorities had been unable to attend, the Chief Fire Officer's proposal that five representatives from each authority should serve on the Panel had not been accepted. The Panel's decision was that only the chair and vice-chair of each authority should serve on the Panel

with other members invited to attend as observers on an ad hoc basis. The Chairman advised the Authority that he was extremely disappointed by the decision itself and by the way in which the decision had been taken, in the absence of two out of the three political representatives. He assured members that it was his intention to raise the matter with Mr Steve Thomas, the WLGA's Director, at the earliest available opportunity. Councillor E C George was of the view that it was imperative that the principle for an expanded Forum or Panel was established on a formal basis as soon as possible. Members:

Resolved: - *that a report be presented to the next meetings of both the Executive Panel and the Fire and Rescue Authority on the progress made on formalising the working relationship between the fire and rescue authorities in Wales and the WLGA.*

Page 9, Item 12, Insurance Provision for Firefighting at or Beneath the Sea: The Chairman confirmed that he would be raising the issue of insurance provision at the next meeting of the National Joint Council for Local Authorities' Fire Brigades (NJC), scheduled for 10th January 2006.

6) Chairman's Report

The Chairman introduced his report (distributed at the meeting) which provided members with a brief update on the meetings and events attended by him, in his capacity as Chairman, since the Fire and Rescue Authority's last meeting on 19th September 2005. The Chairman detailed the various meetings and events listed in his report. He confirmed that, following the presentation given to the Assembly's Social Justice and Regeneration Committee by the Chief Fire Officers and Chairs of the Welsh fire and rescue authorities on 16th November, a further invitation had been received to address the Committee in the near future. Members were informed by the Chairman that the Minister for Social Justice and Regeneration had, during a meeting which he had attended on 8th December, reiterated her view that fire and rescue authorities in Wales had already been through a reorganisation exercise. She had also stated her opposition to fire and rescue authorities becoming precepting authorities. Officers were congratulated by the Chairman on the success of the annual carol service but he registered his disappointment at the number of members in attendance. The Chairman advised the Authority that arrangements were at an advanced stage with regards to establishing a separate North Wales identity for the Young Firefighters' Association (YFA) and also for staging an inter-branch competition. He also informed members that he would be requesting that a one-off £3k provision be made within the 2006/07 budget to finance the setting up of the competition and associated establishment costs. This was supported by Councillor Sharon Frobisher and Councillor John Smith. It was hoped that the YFA's costs in future years could be met from sponsorship money. The Chairman also advised the Authority that he would be submitting a progress report to the Authority's next meeting. It was:

Resolved: - to note the information contained in the report.

7) Integrated Risk Management Plan – Third Year Action Plan

Prior to Assistant Chief Fire Officer (Service Delivery) Paul Claydon introducing the report and the draft Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP) third year Action Plan, "Maintaining the Momentum" (previously circulated), the Chief Fire Officer advised the Authority that the draft plan presented to them had been drawn up in the absence of Assembly Guidance. This was in contrast to the situation in England where IRMP guidance had been available for some time. He proceeded to explain that if the Authority had refrained from drawing up an action plan until the Assembly had published its guidance, the action plan's proposals could not have been incorporated into the Authority's draft budget for 2006/07. Assistant Chief Fire Officer Claydon informed members that the draft Action Plan presented to the Authority included the amendments approved by the Executive Panel at its meeting on 13th December 2005. Members declined his offer of being shown the full presentation given to the IRMP Working Group/Executive Panel at its meeting on 13th December. Assistant Chief Fire Officer Claydon detailed to the Authority the proposals contained in the Action Plan and illustrated to members the data which had been used to form the most significant proposals before answering their questions.

In relation to the Special Appliance Review he explained that the proposal not to replace the Turntable Ladder (TTL), currently based at Bangor, when it reached the end of its operational life in 2008 and to operate on a fleet of three instead of four aerial appliances (ALPs) had been based on historical data, this included the number of incidents to which the appliances had been mobilised and had actually attended during the past few years. Slides detailing this information, the cost of replacing an aerial appliance and its crewing and maintenance costs were shown to members. Officers stressed that these types of appliances, due to the time and space required to set them up were not ideal 'snatch rescue' vehicles. ALPs were also renowned for their mechanical problems and in the case of the TTL there was no longer any manufacturers in the UK that produced or supplied parts for these vehicles. Therefore refurbishment of the current vehicle would not be a viable option. The Authority was then shown slides which mapped the areas that could be reached by the present 4 ALPs within 20 minutes and within 30 minutes of each of the current locations. Assistant Chief Fire Officer Claydon explained that, based on this information, the IRMP Working Group had drawn the conclusion that a 30 minute attendance time should be adopted for ALP vehicles and that the best strategic locations for the three remaining vehicles would be Bangor, Rhyl and Wrexham. Councillors J Vaughan and P C Evans registered their objection to the proposal to remove the ALP based at Llandudno fire station. Councillor Vaughan was of the view that the high number of hotels in Llandudno and the surrounding area justified Llandudno, rather than Bangor, being a base for an ALP. Over 100,000 people visited the Llandudno area during the holiday season and the vehicle had already been used once this year to assist with a rescue. Officers reminded

members that hotels were required by law to have the necessary fire safety measures in place and not to depend on the Service and its resources as a substitute for their own provisions. Councillor Evans remarked that he could not comprehend that the Authority which had, within the last few years, taken a decision to replace the previous ALP based at Llandudno was now proposing to remove the appliance. In reply to a question from Councillor Evans the Chief Fire Officer advised members that the Minister had not given any indications that she would be looking at setting minimum attendance times for special appliances under the new Service Standards. In reply to other questions regarding the possibility of North Wales being dependent on cross-border cover by ALPs from other areas and vice-versa, the Chief Fire Officer advised that this option had also been discussed at length by the IRMP Working Group/Executive Panel. If this was to be included in the Action Plan the authorities in question would require to be notified and, if they agreed to the proposal, a charge would be levied on North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority for this provision. Collaborative working in this area with both Cheshire and Shropshire Fire and Rescue Services would continue. Only recently the Authority had been providing cover for part of the Cheshire area whilst Chester's ALP was unavailable.

The Chief Fire Officer reminded the Authority that at the current meeting it was only being asked to endorse the draft IRMP Third Year Action Plan for public consultation. Once the document was published for consultation, employees, staff representative bodies, local authorities, organisations and the general public would have their opportunity to respond and state their views and concerns. The responses would be collated and reported back to the IRMP Working Group and Executive Panel for consideration. Any required amendments would be done prior to the final Third Year Action Plan being presented to the Authority for adoption at its meeting in March 2006. The Clerk advised the Authority that it should not let the Minister and the Assembly Government's failure to issue the relevant guidance on time halt its future plans or its budget setting process. If the Guidance, when published, took a different view to the one anticipated, the Authority could review its Action Plan at its March meeting.

Assistant Chief Fire Officer Claydon then detailed the other proposals contained in the draft Action Plan. The proposal to charge for persistent and repeated false alarm calls from automatic fire alarm systems was dependent on the relevant legislation being introduced. The introduction of such a regime would enable the Authority to provide a financial disincentive to persistent offenders which would hopefully, in the long run, lead to better system maintenance and release appliances and staff for genuine operational incidents and community fire safety work.

On the third point in the Action Plan, Assistant Chief Fire Officer Claydon advised the Authority that all the moral arguments about the value of co-responding schemes had been discussed. The IRMP Working Group had decided that, as part of a feasibility study into the benefits a co-responding scheme could have

for the fire and rescue service, the ambulance service and the general public, and the impact the provision of the service would have on the Authority's resources, such a scheme should be trialled at Porthmadog, Harlech and Barmouth fire stations.

The fourth action point relating to enhancing the community fire safety (CFS) service to properties in rural areas would also tie in with the findings of the Special Appliance Review, as the proposed dual role appliances would provide a better quality response service to communities in rural areas. Councillor W E Jones referred to a recent incident at a property in the Llangernyw area where it was reported that the nearest appliance had been unable to locate the address and that the second mobilised appliance had reached the property first. The Chief Fire Officer advised that he was not aware of the incident and asked Councillor Jones to provide him with more information so that further enquiries could be made. Assistant Chief Fire Officer Claydon advised members that as part of the enhanced CFS service to rural properties inhabitants in rural areas would be educated on fire safety issues such as keeping Ordnance Survey (OS) Grid References numbers to hand. This Action Point also linked in to the following action point relating to Automatic Location Provision. The provision of automatic location equipment would enable officers to mobilise the most appropriate fire service resource to an incident.

The provision of easy access to performance monitoring information would be of benefit to personnel, Authority members and the public. Councillor D Clayton advised the Authority that the Local Government Data Unit - Wales had recently been looking at developing specific software for local authorities in this particular area. Once the software had been developed they had undertaken to provide it free of charge to all local authorities. Assistant Chief Fire Officer Claydon thanked Councillor Clayton for the information and undertook to make further enquiries about its suitability for fire and rescue authorities.

The final action point in the Draft Action Plan related to a review of the Operational Manager Provision. Members were advised that the review was long overdue and that the Authority required to establish that its resources were strategically located.

The Chairman then advised members that it was recommended that the consultation on the Authority's IRMP Third Year Action Plan should run until 1st March 2006. Consultation responses would then be collated and reported to the IRMP Working Group/Executive Panel who would decide on the amendments, if any, which were required to the Third Year Action Plan before it was presented to the Authority for adoption by the end of March 2006. Members were advised that sufficient time had to be given between the Executive Panel's meeting and the Authority meeting in order that all required amendments could be incorporated into the revised Action Plan. The Chairman suggested holding a meeting of the IRMP Working Group and Executive Panel on Monday 13th March 2006, with the normal Fire and Rescue Authority meeting on 20th March 2006 and

an Extraordinary meeting of the Fire and Rescue Authority to be held on 27th March 2006, the sole purpose of which would be to discuss and adopt the IRMP Third Year Action Plan. Other members were of the view that the holding of two meetings of the full Authority within 7 days of each other was a waste of valuable resources. It would be more prudent to change the date of March's Authority meeting to 27th March in order to fit in with the IRMP process. On being put to the vote it was:

Resolved: -

- i. to note the contents of the report;*
- ii. that the IRMP third year Action Plan "Maintaining the Momentum" be approved as drafted for public consultation, with responses to be received by 1st March 2006;*
- iii. that the results of the consultation be reported back to the IRMP Working Group/Executive Panel for consideration of any further amendments at their meetings on Monday 13th March 2006, prior to the third year Action Plan being presented to the Authority for adoption at its March 2006 meeting; and*
- iv. that the date of the next scheduled meeting of the Fire and Rescue Authority be changed from Monday 20th March 2006 to Monday 27th March 2006 in order to facilitate all necessary amendments to be made to the third year Action Plan prior to its presentation to that meeting for adoption as the Authority's Third Year IRMP Action Plan.*

8) Draft Budget for 2006/07 and Forecast for 2007/08 and 2008/09

The Treasurer introduced his report (previously circulated) to members presenting the draft budget proposals for 2006/07 and the forecasts for 2007/08 and 2008/09. He explained that the draft revenue budget for 2006/07, details of the provisional contributions required by the constituent authorities, the list of the prudential indicators required by the Audit Commission Code of Audit Practice on Treasury Management; the Treasury Management Strategy and Annual Plan for 2006/07 and the draft capital programme were all included as attachments to the report. The Treasurer explained that the key factors which officers had taken into account when drawing up the draft budget were also included in the report.

In reply to members' questions officers advised that following the introduction of the Prudential Code it had been decided to recommend that the "de-minimis" level for capital expenditure should now be set at £100 per item. The reason for setting such a low level was the fact that a number of items now being purchased, particularly in the field of IT, were priced below this limit. Members requested that the recommendation relating to the "de-minimis" level be amended to include the wording "£100 per item". In relation to utilising part of the Pension Provision to alleviate the budgetary pressures of the rank to role assimilation process; the Treasurer confirmed that although the money in the

Provision was not "strictly" the Authority's money but rather the constituent authorities' money, the constituent authorities and auditors were aware of its existence. If a high number of operational incidents had occurred during the past few years the money would have been used to meet the costs of responding to those incidents. If the Assembly Government consults on changes to the funding arrangements for the Pension Scheme and applies the same principles as the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) had applied in relation to funding the Schemes in England, the Authority might be holding a Provision in excess of what would be required. Part of this Provision could then be utilised for other purposes and to keep down demands on the constituent authorities. Authorities in England who had followed a similar route in making provision for future retirement costs had not been penalised. In relation to job evaluation determinations members were advised that only a limited number were currently outstanding and therefore the effect on the overall budget would not be significant.

Councillor W J Chorlton declared an interest as a recipient of a pension under the existing scheme. He was advised by the Clerk that as a retired employee he was not debarred from participating in a discussion relating to future pension schemes as he would not benefit personally. Members:

Resolved: -

- i to approve the draft budget for 2006/07 at £29,349,655 and that £3K from within the draft budget be earmarked for Young Firefighters' Association (YFA) activities during the year;*
- ii that the constituent authorities be advised of the provisional contributions required for 2006/07 as per the final column of the table in Appendix B;*
- iii to delegate to the Executive Panel the power to consider and approve how efficiency savings to cover the costs of rank to role can be determined and implemented for 2006/07;*
- iv to approve the Prudential Indicators as set out in Appendix C;*
- v to approve the Treasury Management Strategy and Annual Plan for 2006/07 as set out in Appendix D;*
- vi to approve the draft capital programme for 2006/07 and associated methods of financing and that the "de-mimimis" level for capital expenditure be set at £100 per item; and*
- vii that if any changes transpire before 31st January 2006, the powers for altering the budget level be delegated to the Executive Panel or, if any such announcements or savings transpire after this date but before 15 February 2006, that this power be delegated to the Treasurer in consultation with the Chairman, Chief Fire Officer and Clerk.*

9) Financial Savings and Service Delivery Improvements of the New Shift System on Day-Crewed Stations.

Assistant Chief Fire Officer (Service Delivery) Paul Claydon introduced his report (previously circulated) and advised members that this report was presented to the Authority in response to a request made by members following the report on the review of the operation of the new shift system on day-crewed stations which had been discussed at the Authority's September meeting. He explained the details contained in the report and advised that officers had conservatively estimated that the Authority, during the ten month period that the new shift system had been operating, had realised financial savings of approximately £48k. In reply to a question, the Chief Fire Officer advised that the amount of savings generated by the operation of the new shift system would only mitigate a small proportion of the overall cost of the 2003 Pay and Conditions of Service Agreement. In the case of North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority these costs were in the region of £300k to £400k. He stressed to members that the financial savings were only a part of the reason for changing the shift times, service delivery improvements was also a major factor. Members:

Resolved: - *to note the contents of the report and that an update report be presented to the Authority in twelve months time on the financial savings and service delivery improvements achieved as a result of the new shift system on day-crewed stations. In addition the report should include details of the increased amount of community fire safety work undertaken and the impact it was having on the number of operational calls received.*

10) North Wales Fire and Rescue Service's New Website

Assistant Chief Fire Officer (Service Support) Colin Hanks introduced his report (previously circulated) which presented the Service and the Authority's new website to members. He was delighted to be able to launch the new fully bilingual website at the meeting, Mr Tony White, the Service's IT Analyst was then introduced to members. Prior to giving members a working demonstration of the new website Mr White informed the Authority that the site had been kept as simple as possible in order to aid easy access to the public as not all areas of North Wales had broadband connections. He proceeded to explain that from the 'home page' the public would be able to choose to access either the English or Welsh version of the Service or the Authority's area on the website. The new website would be managed in-house as a number of staff had been trained to use the database management system. This would allow for the site to be updated on a regular basis. The Chairman confirmed that the consultation on the IRMP Third Year Action Plan would be available on the website and that links from the Service's website to the constituent authorities' websites would be included. Enquiries would also be made to ascertain whether the constituent authorities would include links to the Service's website from their own websites. In reply to a question from Councillor D Clayton the Clerk advised that, as far as he was aware, the Society of Information Technology Managers (SOCITIM) ratings

only applied to local authority websites and that the latest survey had recently been undertaken. Members congratulated officers on the new website and:

Resolved: - to note the report and the launch of the Service's new website.

11) Letter of Representation

The Treasurer introduced his report and copies of the correspondence between him and the Wales Audit Office (WAO) (previously circulated) in relation to the Authority's Statement of Accounts. He explained that, under Regulation 8 of the Accounts and Audit Regulations 1996, as the Authority approved the Statement of Accounts it was required to formally acknowledge the Letter of Representation sent to the WAO. It was:

Resolved: - to formally acknowledge the Letter of Representation sent to the Wales Audit Office in relation to the 2004/05 Statement of Accounts.

12) Communication concerning Financial Statements to those charged with Governance

The Chairman welcomed Mr David Jones, Audit Manager, from the WAO to the meeting to present the Authority with the communication concerning financial statements to those charged with governance. Mr Jones apologised to the Authority for the delay encountered in finalising the audit of the Authority's accounts and emphasised that the delay had been caused by the WAO and not by the Authority. Due to the delay with the audit process the Executive Panel, at its meeting on 26th October, had been unable to transact the current item of business, the item relating to the Letter of Representation and the Approval of the Statement of Accounts for 2004/05. Mr Jones confirmed that some of the presentational amendments requested by the WAO had subsequently been actioned and therefore all the necessary audit procedures had been completed. In order that the WAO could formally discharge its audit functions in relation to the Accounts he had to present the Communication to the Authority before it could approve the final version of the Statement of Accounts.

Mr Jones confirmed to members that there were no issues to report relating to the proposed modifications to the auditor's report; no unadjusted mis-statements; no material weaknesses in accounting and internal control systems identified, or any other matters that he wished to bring to their attention.

The only item which he wished to draw to members' attention was the 'Provisions' held by the Authority on 31st March 2005. The WAO realised that members were aware of the provisions held, although the holding of such provisions did not strictly comply with the CIPFA Statement of Recommended Practice (SoRP), which "requires provision to be made when an authority has a present obligation... as a result of a past event". The auditors had noted that a

note to the Consolidated Balance Sheet made it clear that the 'Provisions' retained by the Authority were "to meet future, rather than past, expenditure that is certain, or likely, to be incurred". Mr Jones informed members that whilst the amounts retained as 'Provisions', with the possible exception of the Pensions Liability, did not comply with the SoRP requirements, the WAO accepted that the approach adopted by the Authority was both prudent and transparent. It was also clear that the amounts set aside were in general utilised within a reasonable period of time and that the constituent authorities were aware of the situation. Members:

Resolved: -

- i. to note the Communication;*
- ii. to acknowledge that the matter of the 'Provisions' held had been drawn to their attention; and*
- iii. to confirm that the Authority was content for the disclosure of these amounts to remain un-amended.*

13) Approval of the Statement of Accounts for 2004/05

The Treasurer introduced his report (previously circulated) which presented to members the audited accounts, amended in line with the findings of the WAO, for approval. He explained that the report which was self-explanatory included a copy of the final accounts and, as requested, a copy of the "Schedule of Issues" issued by the WAO. The Schedule contained the amendments requested by the WAO, all of which were purely presentational amendments. No material amendments to the actual accounts had been required. It was:

Resolved: - *to approve the amended Statement of Accounts for 2004/05.*

14) Delegation of Powers in relation to receiving the Annual Audit Letter

The Treasurer introduced his report (previously circulated) requesting the Authority to note that the Annual Audit Letter for 2004/05 would be received and considered by the Executive Panel. He explained that the reason behind the request that the Executive Panel should receive the Letter was detailed in his report. Members:

Resolved: - *to note that the Annual Audit Letter for 2004/05 would be received and considered by the Executive Panel and that a copy of the letter be sent to all Fire and Rescue Authority members.*

15) Informative

The Chief Fire Officer presented the Authority with the latest issue of the 'Informative' magazine. Members congratulated officers on the publication and

on the successful long-service award ceremony which had been held recently. It was:

Resolved: - to accept the publication

16) Urgent Matters

Service Standards to Fires in the Home in Wales: Copies of a letter from the Assembly Government's Minister for Social Justice and Regeneration, dated 30th November 2005, along with a draft response for members' consideration were distributed at the meeting. The Chief Fire Officer informed members that the consultation document itself contained very little specific information and that in his draft response he had welcomed the emphasis on the proposal to strike the "correct balance between intervention and prevention" and that North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority welcomed the safer communities initiative and was actively engaged in attempting to secure this objective through its IRMP process. The draft response also confirmed that the Authority supported the principle of Service Standards but that it would not be willing to accept "an all Wales standard that set any of the three fire and rescue authorities in a position to be considered less favourably than the others by virtue of geography or demographics". The Chief Fire Officer advised that in his view there was a need for the Service Standards that would be set to cater for both urban and rural communities. Members:

Resolved: - that the response to the Welsh Assembly Government's consultation on the "Service Standards to Fires in the Home in Wales" be issued as drafted by the closing date of 31st January 2006.

Prior to bringing the meeting to a close the Chairman wished all present a merry Christmas and a happy new year.

The meeting concluded at 12.35pm.

The above minutes, pending any inclusions shown, are approved as a true and correct record of proceedings.

Signed: I Roberts

Dated: 27 March, 2006