

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

Minutes of the meeting of North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority held on Monday 21<sup>st</sup> December 2009 at the Denbighshire Council Chamber, Ruthin. Meeting commenced at 10.30am.

### **PRESENT**

<b>Councillor</b>	<b>Representing</b>
S Frobisher (Chair)	Denbighshire County Council
A M Jones (Vice-Chair)	Anglesey County Council
D Barratt	Flintshire County Council
L W Davies	Anglesey County Council
M Ll Davies	Denbighshire County Council
B Dunn	Flintshire County Council
G C Evans	Denbighshire County Council
P C Evans	Conwy County Borough Council
E C George	Wrexham County Borough Council
G James	Flintshire County Council
P Jeffares	Wrexham County Borough Council
E M Jones	Gwynedd Council
D Mackie	Flintshire County Council
A Minshull	Flintshire County Council
T Roberts	Gwynedd Council
A Tansley	Conwy County Borough Council
M Thomas	Conwy County Borough Council
G O Williams	Gwynedd Council

### **Also present:**

S A Smith (Chief Fire Officer and Chief Executive); C Everett (Clerk to the Authority); K W Finch (Treasurer to the Authority); D Docx (Deputy Chief Fire Officer); C Hanks, P Claydon and R Simmons (Assistant Chief Fire Officers); G W Griffiths (Senior Operations Manager); R Fairhead (Senior Fire Safety 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); A Davies (Member Liaison Officer) and S Jones (Member Liaison Assistant).

### **APOLOGIES**

<b>Councillor</b>	<b>Representing</b>
B Blackmore	Wrexham County Borough Council
T Evans	Wrexham County Borough Council
M Griffith	Gwynedd Council
N M Jones	Flintshire County Council
W Knightly	Conwy County Borough Council
J V Owen	Anglesey County Council
W P Roberts	Conwy County Borough Council
G Williams	Denbighshire County Council

- 1 NOTICE OF URGENT MATTERS
  - 1.1 The Chairman 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 19<sup>th</sup> October 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 report presented listed meetings and events attended by Cllr S Frobisher and Cllr A M Jones in their capacity as Chair and Vice-Chair during October and November 2009.
  - 5.2 **RESOLVED to note the information provided.**
- 6 WALES CHARTER FOR MEMBER SUPPORT AND DEVELOPMENT
  - 6.1 The report was presented to inform Members that the Authority has recently been accredited with the Wales Charter for Member Support and Development. In order to formally acknowledge the accolade, the Clerk proceeded to re-present the award received from the WLGA to the Chair. The Clerk also suggested that Members may wish to consider how to provide feedback on the Authority's work to the constituent authorities as part of its future work on member development .
  - 6.2 **RESOLVED to note the report and the feedback received from the WLGA.**
- 7 DRAFT BUDGET 2010-11
  - 7.1 The Treasurer presented the report which contained proposals to the Authority in respect of the budget for 2010-11 and the forecasts for 2011-12 and 2012-13. The draft budget proposed an increase of 2.5%, which was higher than the average financial settlement across North Wales but did include an increase of almost 1% to invest in updating ICT systems. The impact for constituent authorities across North Wales will be variable due to the population of each county and therefore the figure for Flintshire, Wrexham and Denbighshire will be slightly higher.

7.2 In relation to the capital programme, Cllr E C George asked about the progress of the new tripartite station at Wrexham. ACFO Hanks explained the latest situation about the land to Members. It was noted that the outline business case was on the cusp of being approved by the Assembly and that the detailed business case will be developed in the New Year. Members were reminded that the Authority had set a budget of £5m for the Fire and Rescue Service's share of the project and that work was taking place regarding the specification to ensure that this limit will not be exceeded.

7.3 Cllr M LI Davies asked about the impact on the pay line if the Treasury decided not to award any increase in 2010-11. The Treasurer explained that although this would reduce the budget requirement by about £238,000, it was more realistic to allocate a budget for a 1% pay rise. The Vice-Chair informed Members that the LGA fire panel had also recommended this course of action.

7.4 **RESOLVED to:**

- (i) **approve the draft budget for 2010-11 based on the information provided in the report;**
- (ii) **note the anticipated out-turn position for 2009-10;**
- (iii) **agree that the Constituent Authorities be advised of the provisional contributions required for 2010-11;**
- (iv) **approve the draft capital programme for 2010-11 and associated methods of financing;**
- (v) **agree that if any changes transpire before 15 February 2010, requiring the budget to be reduced it should be delegated to the Treasurer, in consultation with the Chief Fire Officer and Clerk. Any increase should be referred to a reconvened Executive Panel;**
- (vi) **agree that ACFO Hanks continues to inform Wrexham members of any developments with the tripartite station.**

8 OPERATIONAL MANAGER PROVISION

8.1 The report was presented to provide members with information about the ongoing development of a dedicated operational officer provision in North Wales Fire and Rescue Service. Members also received a presentation at the meeting.

8.2 In the 2009/10 RRP action plan the Authority had agreed to undertake an officer cover review to examine how the Service provides supervisory cover by middle and senior managers at emergency incidents. The review was intended as a way to look at the viability of a 'dedicated response option' and whether it would improve operational assurance at incidents and the efficiency of the Service.

8.3 All existing operational level officers have been engaged in the process through a series of away days and are being kept informed of progress. Work is continuing on developing a shift system and a job evaluation process is underway for assessing the roles in Fire Safety that are currently undertaken by operational personnel but do not require operational competence.

Further information will be available once the job evaluation process has been completed,

- 8.4 An implementation plan with full costings will be produced for consideration by the Executive Panel in February 2010. One of the challenges will be to maintain cover during the transition period.
- 8.5 Cllr Dunn, as a member of the Executive Panel, informed Members that at no time during any RRP or Executive Panel meetings had there been discussions about savings; the review had been undertaken to improve the service to the public and to bring the Fire and Rescue Service into the twenty-first century. The Vice-Chair reiterated these comments and said that the purpose of the review, instigated by the RRP action plan, is to achieve a balance between operational aspects and the delivery of fire safety.
- 8.6 **RESOLVED to note the information presented.**

## 9 WELSH LANGUAGE SCHEME

- 9.1 ACFO Hanks presented the report on the revised Welsh Language Scheme for 2010-13 which builds on the last Scheme. This is the third scheme since 1996. The Scheme had been out to consultation between September and November; only two comments had been received and both were positive about the Scheme.
- 9.2 The Scheme outlines the linguistic skills strategy which requires all new members of staff and those successful in promotion to learn a basic level of Welsh. Two CDs have been recorded to assist staff in learning the language.
- 9.3 Cllr L W Davies was pleased to see the Service moving forward with the Welsh language. Cllr Davies praised the Service for its work in raising the profile and promoting the Welsh language, and the Senior Management Team for their commitment to the language. Cllr Davies hoped that the efforts will be reflected by a further increase in the number of Welsh speakers within the Service in future.
- 9.4 It was noted that there is an opportunity for Members to take part in the process and that the CDs can be made available to Members on request.
- 9.5 **RESOLVED to approve the revised Welsh Language Scheme 2010-13 for publication.**

## 10 THE INTRODUCTION OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT (WALES) MEASURE 2009

- 10.1 The report was presented to inform Members of the steps being taken towards the introduction of the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2009 which received royal assent earlier this year. The Measure is designed to replace most of the Best Value legislation and to give a firmer framework for community planning. The Measure will be introduced incrementally from January 2010.
- 10.2 In terms of corporate planning, the changes for the Authority and the Service will affect both the normal annual planning processes and the interaction

between the Authority and the Auditor General. New guidance has been issued on the Wales Programme for Improvement and is currently out for consultation. The Assembly is also currently consulting on a single guidance relating to part 2 of the Measure for all 'community planning partners'.

- 10.3 Discussions are on-going between the three fire and rescue authorities, the Assembly and the Wales Audit Office to streamline and unify the various processes (annual service plans, annual returns, setting targets, RRP process, budget planning, public consultation, operational assurance and audit processes) as far as possible.
- 10.4 The Vice-Chair thanked the Corporate Planning Manager for the report and highlighted the importance of ensuring the performance indicators take into consideration that response times across North Wales will vary due to the rurality of the area.

10.5 **RESOLVED to note the information provided about the Measure.**

11 HEALTH AND SAFETY EXECUTIVE (HSE) UPDATE AND GENERAL UPDATE FROM THE CHIEF FIRE OFFICER

11.1 The Chief Fire Officer formally informed Members of the appointment of Carl Sargeant as Assembly Minister for Local Government and Social Justice. The Authority's relationship with the previous Minister, Dr Brian Gibbons, had been excellent and he had been a strong supporter of the fire and rescue service across Wales. It is hoped to continue the excellent working relationship with the new Minister.

11.2 The Chief Fire Officer also informed Members that since 16<sup>th</sup> November there had been five fire-related deaths in North Wales. Four of those were being treated as accidental. As a result of these incidents and the CFO Task Group Review Report, press releases and media messages from the Service will be harder hitting in future; Members were supportive of this stance and noted the request that they speak to the Chief Fire Officer if they had any concerns about media issues.

Cllr M LI Davies left the meeting at this juncture.

11.3 Cllr George fully supported the planned course of action and suggested Members could work closer with their local fire stations to get the fire safety message out. Members also thanked officers for keeping them informed when serious incidents occur in their areas.

11.4 Members were aware that the HSE had decided earlier in the year to undertake a structured inspection of a number of fire and rescue services across the UK. North Wales had been chosen as part of this year's planned visits. The HSE was focusing on three key areas – the Incident Command System, breathing apparatus training and operational assurance. The inspection had taken place during the first week of December and a written report was due in the New Year. A summary of the report will be made available to Members at the next meeting.

11.5 **RESOLVED to note the update provide by the Chief Fire Officer.**

12 APPOINTMENT OF INDEPENDENT MEMBERS TO SERVE ON THE AUTHORITY'S STANDARDS COMMITTEE

12.1 The report was presented to inform the Authority that two independent Members had been appointed to serve on the Authority's Standards Committee.

12.2 The Clerk informed Members that three candidates had been interviewed and based on merit two women had been appointed to the committee. It was noted that this will help with the previous concern of the gender imbalance on the Committee. The Committee will be meeting early in the New Year and agenda items will include refresher training and a forward work plan.

12.3 Cllr P C Evans thanked the Clerk for his arrangements on the day of the interviews and confirmed that the three candidates were of high calibre. He noted the comments about the standards committee only meeting once a year in previous years and suggested the committee could consider looking at consultations to increase its workload.

12.4 **RESOLVED to note the contents of the report presented to the Authority meeting.**

13 MEETINGS DATES 2010

13.1 Members were provided with dates of Authority, Executive Panel, Audit Committee and Champions' working group meetings for 2010.

13.2 **RESOLVED to note the dates for meetings.**

14 MINUTES FOR INFORMATION

14.1 Members noted the unconfirmed minutes of the following two meetings:

- (i) Executive Panel 16<sup>th</sup> November 2009;
- (ii) Audit Committee 27<sup>th</sup> November 2009.

14.2 Members were asked to ratify the decision of the Audit Committee at its first meeting to appoint Cllr E C George as Chair and Cllr D Barratt as Vice-Chair of the committee. **RESOLVED to ratify both appointments.**

Cllr M Thomas left at this juncture.

15 INFORMATIVE MAGAZINE

15.1 ACFO Hanks presented the latest version of the magazine and informed Members that the next issue will be in a new format.

15.2 **RESOLVED to accept the publication.**

## PART II

### 16 SENIOR PAY REVIEW

- 16.1 The report was presented to inform Members of the outcomes of the independent review of senior pay within the Fire and Rescue Service for the five designated senior posts. The Authority agreed in December 2006 that senior pay would be reviewed on a three-year basis with the next review date set at 1<sup>st</sup> April 2009. The review had been conducted by The Reward Partnership, and John Kirkwood, one of the consultants that had undertaken the review, was present at the meeting to explain the process to Members and answer any questions that arose.
- 16.2 Members were advised to consider two questions. Firstly, the rates of senior pay which are comparable in the recruitment marketplace and would meet the dual tests of (i) equity of treatment and (ii) mitigation of the risks of recruitment and retention. Secondly, the affordability of any pay offer within the context of the salary provision set within the Authority's budget, and within the constraints on that budget overall.
- 16.3 **RESOLVED:**
- (i) that the recommendations of the independent review of senior pay be accepted and the pay changes for the five senior postholders, as set out in the review report, be implemented in three equal annual increments with effect from 1 April 2009; and**
  - (ii) that the third post of Assistant Chief Fire Officer be expected to operate at Gold Command level when the post is advertised in 2010 with candidates being either Gold Command level pre-trained or required to achieve Gold Command level within a reasonable timescale, and the Chief Fire Officer to submit a further report on the recruitment timetable and arrangements for the position.**