

NORTH WALES FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY

Minutes of the meeting of North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority held on Monday 19th October 2009 at Council Chamber, Bodlondeb, Conwy. Meeting commenced at 10.30am.

PRESENT

Councillor	Representing
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
G C Evans	Denbighshire County Council
P C Evans	Conwy County Borough Council
T Evans	Wrexham County Borough Council
E C George	Wrexham County Borough Council
W Knightly	Conwy County Borough 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
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); B Davies (Monitoring Officer 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); L Roberts MBE (Control Room Manager); S Morris (Corporate Planning Manager); T Williams (Corporate Communications Manager); I Williams (Executive Support 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); Joanne West (KPMG) and John Weston (Wales Audit Office).

APOLOGIES

Councillor	Representing
B Blackmore	Wrexham County Borough Council
B Dunn	Flintshire County Council
M Griffith	Gwynedd Council
G James	Flintshire County Council
P Jeffares	Wrexham County Borough Council
E M Jones	Gwynedd Council
N M Jones	Flintshire County Council
G Williams	Denbighshire County Council

1 NOTICE OF URGENT MATTERS

1.1 The Chair advised that one item had been submitted for consideration. It was agreed to proceed with discussion of this item at this juncture.

1.2 Atal Tân had requested the Authority to nominate a Trustee to its Board. Members nominated Cllr S Frobisher to replace Cllr T Roberts as Trustee. The Chair thanked Members for the nomination and thanked Cllr T Roberts for representing the Authority previously.

1.3 **RESOLVED that Cllr S Frobisher represent the Authority as Trustee on the Atal Tân Board.**

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 15th June 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 *14 – Wales Charter for Member Support and Development* – the Chief Fire Officer informed Members that the process had now been concluded and the Peer Review Panel had visited Headquarters on 8th October to interview Members of the Authority and officers involved with the Charter. The Authority had been awarded the Charter and the Chair would be attending a presentation ceremony on 19th November. The Chief Fire Officer thanked Alwen Davies and her predecessor Rhian Evans for their work on the Charter and the Chair thanked those Members that had been interviewed by the Panel.

5 CHAIR'S REPORT

5.1 The report presented listed meetings and events attended by Cllr Sharon Frobisher and Cllr Aled Morris Jones in their capacity as Chair and Vice-Chair covering the period 15th June to the end of September 2009.

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

6 DRAFT IMPROVEMENT PLAN 2009-10 AND RISK REDUCTION PLAN ACTION PLAN 2010-11

6.1 The Deputy Chief Fire Officer presented the report to ask for Members' approval of the North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority's draft Improvement Plan 2009-10 incorporating the Risk Reduction Plan (RRP) action plan 2010-11 prior to publication by 31st October 2009.

6.2 The Deputy Chief Fire Officer led Members through the plan and highlighted pages 38-39 (performance compared with other fire and rescue authorities in the same 'family group' as North Wales). The comparisons highlighted the need to continue work in the following areas: community fire safety, prevention of accidental dwelling fires particularly those resulting in injuries and deaths. In response to a Member's question about the 'family group' it was confirmed that the groups were based on Fire and Rescue Services being broadly the same in terms of rural/urban mix and population.

6.3 The actions from the RRP annual action plan for 2009-10 were noted on page 50. The actions were continuation actions from previous action plans and are: to undertake an officer cover review and to transfer 12 posts originally dedicated to Aerial Ladder Platforms in order to reallocate resources to community fire safety.

6.4 A small working group of Members had been established to undertake a review of risk and the standards of fire cover in rural areas. The group had met regularly up until March 2009 and the RRP consultation document issued over the summer of 2009 had consulted on four broad principles. Now that the consultation period had ended, the working group would be reconvened with the first meeting arranged for 9th November 2009.

6.5 Cllr P Evans raised the issue that there was no actual mention of community fire safety and that there should be a specific mention in the document that the Authority is a statutory member of Community Safety Partnerships.

6.6 **RESOLVED to:**

- (i) **approve the draft Improvement Plan 2009-10 incorporating the Risk Reduction Plan Action Plan 2010-11 for publication by 31st October 2009 subject to including a paragraph about community fire safety and the statutory role of the Authority on the Community Safety Partnerships;**
- (ii) **note the requirement to publish an Improvement Plan for 2009-10 and Risk Reduction Plan Action Plan for 2010-11 before 31st October 2009.**

7 CHIEF FIRE OFFICER'S TASK GROUP REPORT: A REVIEW OF THE 2007 REPORT INTO ACCIDENTAL DWELLING FIRE DEATHS

7.1 The Chief Fire Officer reminded Members that the first task group report had been produced in 2007 as a result of a high number of accidental dwelling fire deaths. The report contained a number of recommendations in order to try and reduce such incidents in the future.

7.2 In May 2009 the Chief Fire Officer had reconvened the task group to undertake a formal review of the original recommendations and to evaluate and measure progress to date. The draft document was circulated to Members at the meeting with a caveat that whereas the first report had been public-facing, the review report was intended for internal use but would be shared with key partners.

7.3 **RESOLVED to note the information provided and accept the report in its draft format.**

8 PROVISIONAL OUTTURN 2009-2010

8.1 The report informed Members of the estimated provisional outturn for the financial year 2009-2010.

8.2 Expenditure against budget is monitored closely with any variances highlighted as soon as possible. Current indications are that there will be a slight overspend of £5,282. This overspend is small compared to the budget of £31 million.

8.3 Members were pleased with the figures presented and asked for clarification about the local government employees, it was confirmed that these were administration staff and community safety practitioners.

8.4 A job evaluation exercise had been conducted during the year, but there were some instances where staff were not being paid the appropriate rate for their role, therefore they had been on temporary rates until the results of the job evaluation were published. This had

caused an increase on pay budget lines at the beginning of the financial year. However, early indications showed that they had been placed in the right pay scale and this issue will be resolved for the next financial year.

8.5 In response to a Member's question about equal pay and back-pay, it was confirmed that it had been agreed with representative bodies that back-pay would be back-dated to April 2009 and the evaluation results are currently with the legal advisors to ensure that there would be no equal pay issues. All issues in relation to the job evaluation will be handled as sensitively as possible with staff.

8.6 In response to a question about the £60k allocated for discipline officer, it was confirmed that a Service Level Agreement was currently being drawn up with the Police Authority in order to use their investigation officers and access their expertise which would speed up the discipline process. The £40k for employment law was to deal with a number of employment tribunals pending.

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

9 TREASURY MANAGEMENT AND PRUDENTIAL INDICATORS

9.1 The report was presented to keep Members informed about changes to the prudential indicators and treasury management in accordance with requirements of the CIPFA Prudential Code for Capital Finance and CIPFA Code of Practice on Treasury Management.

9.2 The Prudential Indicators and the Treasury Management Strategy for 2009-2010 were approved in March 2009. Since their approval the prudential indicators estimated for 2009-2010 onwards have changed due to slippage in the capital programme for 2008-2009. Also there has been a new Public Works Loan Board (PWLB) loan with the Principality Building Society and some changes to the list of counterparties.

9.3 **RESOLVED to:**

- (i) approve the amended Prudential Indicators;**
- (ii) approve the extended criteria for investments and note the counterparties; and**
- (iii) note the new PWLB loan.**

10 MAKING THE CONNECTIONS: BUILDINGS MANAGEMENT

10.1 Joanne West from KPMG informed Members that a review of North Wales Fire and Rescue Service's asset management had been undertaken. The report was part of the Wales Audit Office's commitment to an ongoing programme of work focussing on the Making the Connections agenda across the public sector in Wales.

Joanne West led members through each criteria of the review and the recommendations made in relation to each one.

10.2 The overall conclusion stated that North Wales Fire and Rescue Service has arrangements in place that should support improvements in efficiency and service delivery to meet the needs and expectations of users for the 21st century based on the following:

- a good, clear asset management plan in place
- performance management arrangements work well
- robust procedures to obtain value for money
- clear processes to deal with large projects and ongoing maintenance work
- good examples of cost savings through collaboration.

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

11 ANNUAL AUDIT LETTER 2008-09

11.1 Joanne West and John Weston co-presented the annual audit letter and highlighted that the Authority:

- had complied with financial and performance improvement reporting requirements and had appropriate arrangements to administer and report financial matters and to secure value for money in its use of resources in 2008-09;
- had appropriate arrangements in place to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources in 2008-09; and
- the Improvement Plan 2009-10 meets statutory requirements and provides a balanced view of the Authority's performance in 2008-09.

11.2 An examination of the Authority's significant financial systems had not identified any material weaknesses in internal control, but there were areas where there can be continued improvements.

11.3 John Weston commented on the positive working relationship that the Authority had with the auditors and peer assessment team. The Authority had not collected data on the national indicators due to the high number of home fire safety checks conducted, however, a new system had gone live on 15th October 2009 that would collate this statistical information in future.

11.4 **RESOLVED to note the contents of the Annual Audit Letter for 2008-09.**

12 STANDARDS COMMITTEE VACANCIES

12.1 The Authority had agreed at its June meeting to advertise for two new independent members for the Standards Committee. Five applications

had been received and Members were asked to nominate four members to sit on the advisory panel.

12.2 RESOLVED:

- (i) that the following four Members be appointed to the advisory panel as follows: Cllrs P C Evans; E C George; J V Owen and W P Roberts;**
- (ii) to agree that the appointment of the lay panel member for the advisory panel should be delegated to the Chair, Chief Fire Officer and the Clerk.**

13 MINUTES OF MEETINGS FOR INFORMATION

- 13.1 Members were asked to note the minutes of the Executive Panel meeting held on 13th July and the draft minutes of the Executive Panel meeting held on 21st September.
- 13.2 At the meeting on 21st September, a report on budget options had been submitted and since then the Revenue Support Grant for Wales had been published and the average across North Wales was 1.73%.
- 13.3 The Chief Fire Officer also informed Members that confirmation had been received that the Assembly will meet the costs for Firelink for 2010-11.