

NORTH WALES FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY

Minutes of the meeting of North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority held on Monday 16th March 2009 at Council Chamber, Llangefni. Meeting commenced at 10.30am.

PRESENT

Councillor	Representing
T Roberts (Chairman)	Gwynedd Council
B Blackmore	Wrexham County Borough 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
S Frobisher	Denbighshire County Council
E C George	Wrexham County Borough Council
M Griffith	Gwynedd Council
G James	Flintshire County Council
P Jeffares	Wrexham County Borough Council
A M Jones	Anglesey County Council
E M Jones	Gwynedd Council
D Mackie	Flintshire County Council
A Minshull	Flintshire County Council
W P Roberts	Conwy County Borough Council
A Tansley	Conwy County Borough Council
M Thomas	Conwy County Borough Council
G Williams	Denbighshire County Council
G O Williams	Gwynedd Council

Also present:

S A Smith (Chief Fire Officer and Chief Executive); C P Everett (Clerk and 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 Officers); W A Murphy (Senior Operations Manager); R Fairhead (Senior Fire Safety Manager); G Brandrick (Training and Development Manager); T Williams (Corporate Communications Manager); L Roberts (Control Room Manager); I Williams (Executive Support Manager); C Dingle (Finance Manager); S Forrest (Accountant, Treasurer's Department, Conwy County Borough Council); A Davies (Member Liaison Officer) and S Jones (Member Liaison Assistant).

APOLOGIES

Councillor	Representing
D Barratt	Flintshire County Council
T Evans	Wrexham County Borough Council
N M Jones	Flintshire County Council
J V Owen	Anglesey County Council
W T Owen	Gwynedd County Council
R Peacock	Conwy County Borough 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 INTRODUCTIONS

- 3.1 At a recent meeting of the Standards Committee, an independent member had raised the issue of officers and Members not introducing themselves at meetings.

- 3.2 **RESOLVED to ask authors of reports to introduce themselves when presenting their reports.**

4 MINUTES

- 4.1 The following minutes were submitted:

- i. Fire and Rescue Authority meeting held on 15th December 2008;

- 4.2 **RESOLVED to approve the minutes as a true and correct record of proceedings.**

- 4.3 The following unapproved minutes of meetings were submitted for information purposes:

- ii Executive Panel held on 2nd February 2009;
- iii Standards Committee held on 2nd February 2009;

iv Member Support and Development Champions' Working Group held on 13th January 2009.

4.4 **RESOLVED to note the minutes.**

5 MATTERS ARISING

5.1 8.2 (vi) – the Chief Fire Officer's Task Group was established in 2006 due to the high number of fire-related deaths. The CFO will be reconstituting the group to assess the results and outcomes since the report and a further report will be provided to the Authority in October.

5.2 10.5 - Audit Committee – it was confirmed that the Audit Committee will be operational in the next municipal year. Notice of any decision (not recommendations to the full Authority) made by the Executive Panel will be circulated to all Members within an agreed timescale so that Members have an opportunity to further discuss any of the decisions.

5.3 All-Wales Resilience Project (from minutes of Executive Panel meeting held on 2nd February) – the CFO explained that the primary benefit of the project was to link the Control facility of the three Fire and Rescue Services in Wales. Work is ongoing to align the working practices which would be of benefit if a major incident occurred.

5.4 Budget options (from minutes of Executive Panel meeting held on 2nd February) – the Treasurer informed Members that there had been an opportunity to reschedule some debt which had meant a reduction in the budget requirements for 2009/10. A report had been presented to the Executive Panel on 2nd February providing further detail.

5.5 The post of third sector coordinator had been filled and it was noted that the primary role was to connect with the voluntary sector councils across North Wales.

6 CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

6.1 The Chairman presented his report on events and meetings that he and the Vice-Chairman had attended since the December meeting.

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

7 PROVISIONAL OUTTURN 2008/09

- 7.1 The report was presented to provide Members with an estimated provisional outturn for the financial year 2008/2009.
- 7.2 The £93,000 overspend on Buckley fire station was due to the condition of the utility equipment, having to install a sprinkler system and the increase in costs of building material and labour. It was noted that all stations being remodelled must have a sprinkler system installed. Members were informed that the official opening for Buckley fire station had been postponed due to the unavailability of the Minister, Dr Brian Gibbons AM.
- 7.3 The overspend on employment law was a result of complicated industrial tribunal and employment issues that could not be dealt with in-house; external lawyers were required to defend the Authority properly. A Member requested details of the number of cases dealt with externally and understood that information provided would be limited to the numbers and types of cases due to the sensitive and confidential nature of the matters.
- 7.4 In response to a Member's question about the underspend on DDA compliance, it was confirmed that plans (including planning permission and building regulations requirements) for all 26 stations had now been signed off. The tender process to do the work will start shortly and the work will be undertaken in phases.
- 7.5 Work on Llangefni fire station will start in July; employees will be relocated to Menai Bridge fire station.
- 7.6 It was noted that the 'actual' amount of the advertising budget spent would increase before the end of March due to outstanding invoices to be paid including one for North Wales' share of the all-Wales recruitment process for whole-time firefighters.
- 7.7 **RESOLVED to note the estimated underspend on revenue and the position in relation to the capital programme.**

8 PRUDENTIAL INDICATORS, TREASURY MANAGEMENT STRATEGY AND MINIMUM REVENUE PROVISION STATEMENT

- 8.1 The Treasurer presented the report to provide Members with the Prudential Indicators and Treasury Management Strategy for 2009/2010 and to seek approval for the Minimum Revenue Provision Statement.

8.2 In response to a Member's question, it was confirmed that any money borrowed comes from the PWLB but that the Assembly provides the approval for the borrowing.

8.3 **RESOLVED to approve the**

(i) Prudential Indicators;

(ii) Treasury Management Strategy and Annual Plan for 2009/2010; and

(iii) Minimum Revenue Provision Policy.

9 MEMBERS' ALLOWANCE SCHEME

9.1 Members were requested to consider the recommendations of the Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales and their application to the North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority.

9.2 The Clerk explained that although the report of the Independent Remuneration Panel does not legally apply to the Fire and Rescue Authorities they are required by the 2007 Regulations to have regard to the matters prescribed by the Panel for the types and maximum levels of allowances payable by their constituent authorities.

9.3 The Clerks to the three Fire and Rescue Authorities in Wales had met and discussed the report and were collectively recommending this review to the individual authorities to achieve a consistent all-Wales approach.

9.4 It was noted by a Member that Anglesey County Council had not increased the Special Responsibility Allowance by 2.45% as stated in Appendix A. This would be clarified and the applicable allowance amended accordingly.

9.5 Members commented on the recommendations as follows:

(i) Introducing a care allowance – Members felt that it was a discretionary issue and there might be inequality if Members are able to claim it from the FRA but not from their constituent authority. **Members agreed to defer decision and requested the Clerk to provide a fuller report detailing arrangements of constituent authorities and the limitations for claiming the allowance.**

(ii) Subsistence allowance – Members felt that the £28 should be available flexibly throughout a 24-hour period and not capped for each meal. **The Clerk to provide further information on the**

practicalities of claiming for subsistence with flexibility within the maximum allowance.

- (iii) Overnight allowance – **Members agreed the following rates for 2009/10 as determined in the Supplementary Report of the Independent Remuneration Panel:**

London	£124.00
All other cases	£ 95.00

- (iv) **Members noted that the travelling rates will remain at 40 pence per mile.**
- (v) Co-optee's allowance is applicable to Members of the Standards Committee. Members felt that the work of the Standards Committee was minimal compared to the Standards Committees of constituent authorities. **Following a vote, it was agreed by majority not to introduce a co-optee's allowance.**
- (vi) **Members agreed to rename the Scheme to Member Remuneration Scheme as suggested by the Remuneration Panel.**

10 BUSINESS CONTINUITY MANAGEMENT UPDATE

- 10.1 Bill Murphy presented the report to update Members on the progress being made regarding the arrangements in place to identify and address significant risks to the Authority's ability to discharge its statutory responsibilities.
- 10.2 **RESOLVED to note the current position relating to the Service's management of business continuity.**

11 SPECIAL APPLIANCE REVIEW

- 11.1 Bill Murphy presented the report 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 (those vehicles whose primary role is rescue or support in a non-fire environment) operated by the Service.
- 11.2 Mr Murphy thanked Members for attending the new car technology seminar held at Rhyl Community Fire Station on 11th March; it was very encouraging for staff to see Members taking an interest. Cllr M Ll Davies congratulated Mr Murphy and all those involved with the seminar.

- 11.3 In response to a question on charging for the use of the special rescue unit, Mr Murphy confirmed that the Service works closely with the RSPCA and will not normally charge, however, there are certain circumstances where people will be charged a fee.
- 11.4 It was confirmed that there was no catering equipment available on the welfare unit, however managers are able to use pre-paid credit cards when refreshments are needed during incidents.
- 11.5 Cllr E C George congratulated the Service for providing the various units and for providing training on how to use the equipment.

The Chief Fire Officer informed Members that Mr Murphy will be retiring at the end of April and thanked him for his 30+ years service to NWFRS. The Chair also paid tribute to Mr Murphy stating that he was very well thought of throughout the UK and was knowledgeable and always very professional.

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

- 12.1 The report was provided to inform Members of the Standards Committee's activities for 2008/09.
- 12.2 Cllr Glyn Williams highlighted the fact that there was no female representation on the Committee and that this could be an issue in some code of conduct and disciplinary matters. Membership of all Committees will be reviewed at the June AGM and there will be an opportunity for the Authority to implement a gender balance from its own membership on the Committee.
- 12.3 **RESOLVED to note the contents of the annual report of the standards committee.**

13 INVOLVEMENT WITH LOCAL SERVICE BOARDS

- 13.1 Members were informed of the Fire and Rescue Service's involvement in Local Service Boards and to seek support in progressing this joint work.
- 13.2 In response to a question about Members being able to attend LSB meetings it was noted that the membership was predominantly at executive level. The Clerk explained that LSBs worked with the Assembly to keep membership to a minimum but at the same time ensuring maximum impact within their Authorities. Other Members felt that the

current format was sufficient. It was agreed that a periodic report would be provided detailing the work of all 6 LSBs and more specifically any on-going work relating to fire.

13.3 **RESOLVED to note the information provided and that a further detailed report will be available at the June meeting.**

14 COMBINED FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITIES' RESERVES

14.1 The report was presented by the Clerk and Treasurer to inform Members of recent discussions regarding the Combined Fire and Rescue Authorities' Reserves at the Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA) Council meeting held on 20th February 2009.

14.2 The issue was highlighted by the Wales Audit Office (WAO) in June 2008. The WAO decided that Fire and Rescue Authorities in Wales did not have the necessary statutory powers to hold reserves, despite the fact that reserves have been held by authorities without accounting qualification since their establishment in 1998.

14.3 The Treasurer informed Members that at the request of Assembly officials, the Treasurers of the three FRAs had produced a separate paper on the matter. The report by the WLGA was to be welcomed and it was noted that an amendment to the Combination Order was work in progress.

14.4 **RESOLVED to note the information.**

15 THE *INFORMATIVE* MAGAZINE

15.1 Members were presented with the latest issue of the 'Informative' magazine. It was noted that the magazine is designed and produced in-house and printed externally.

15.2 Cllr A M Jones welcomed the publication and also took the opportunity to thank the organisers of the Community Awards Ball for organising an excellent event on 27th February.

15.3 **RESOLVED to note the *Informative*.**