

## NORTH WALES FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY

Minutes of the Executive Panel Meeting of the North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority held on 10<sup>th</sup> May 2010 at Fire and Rescue Headquarters, St Asaph. Meeting commenced at 2pm.

### PRESENT

Cllr S Frobisher (Chair)	Denbighshire County Council
Cllr A M Jones	Anglesey County Council
Cllr L W Davies	Anglesey County Council
Cllr M LI Davies	Denbighshire County Council
Cllr B Dunn	Flintshire County Council
Cllr T Evans	Wrexham County Borough Council
Cllr G James	Flintshire County Council
Cllr P Jeffares	Wrexham County Borough Council
Cllr J V Owen	Anglesey County Council
Cllr T Roberts	Gwynedd Council
Cllr W P Roberts	Conwy County Borough Council
Cllr M Thomas	Conwy County Borough Council

### ALSO PRESENT:

S A Smith (Chief Fire Officer and Chief Executive); D Docx (Deputy Chief Fire Officer); B Davies (Monitoring Officer); C Hanks, P Claydon and R Simmons (Assistant Chief Fire Officers); G Brandrick (SLDC Development Manager); R Fairhead (Senior Fire Safety Manager); G Griffiths (Senior Operations Manager); L Roberts (Control Manager); S Forrest (Accountancy – Conwy County Borough Council); S Morris (Corporate Planning Manager); T Williams (Corporate Communications Manager); G Jones (Executive Support Manager); J Brown (Finance Manager); A Davies (Member Liaison Officer).

### Apologies:

Cllr G C Evans	Denbighshire County Council
Cllr W T Owen	Gwynedd Council
C Everett	Clerk to the Authority
K Finch	Treasurer to the Authority

Before the meeting started, the Chair asked all present to observe a minute's silence in memory of Firefighter Gareth Evans from Flint who passed away in April. The Chief Fire Officer informed Members that Firefighter Evans had died following a long period of ill-health; the funeral was extremely well attended and dignified. An officer from the Service had been liaising/supporting the family over recent weeks.

### 1 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

1.1 None.

### 2 MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 1<sup>ST</sup> FEBRUARY 2010

2.1 The minutes of the meeting held on 1<sup>st</sup> February were approved as a true and correct record.

3 MATTERS ARISING

3.1 The appointment process for the post of Assistant Chief Fire Officer – following a rigorous interview process held early in March, Ruth Simmons had been appointed to the post.

4 FIRST DRAFT COMBINED IMPROVEMENT AND RISK REDUCTION PLAN 2009-12 AND ASSOCIATED CONSULTATION DOCUMENT

4.1 The paper was presented for Members to approve the first draft of the Combined Improvement and Risk Reduction Plan 2009-12 and the associated consultation document and questionnaire.

4.2 The Deputy Chief Fire Officer explained that following recent legislation, the Authority now had to produce a Combined Improvement and Risk Reduction Plan which will set out the external and internal improvement objectives of the Authority. Following discussions at the RRP working group and the agreement of the Authority at the March meeting, the improvement objectives will be around business continuity, equality and diversity, sustainability and environmental issues. The first draft of the plan will be distributed to Members once completed.

4.3 Also required in association with the Combined Improvement and RRP was the consultation document, which had been written in an “easy to read” language to encourage debate and responses from the public. The first draft had been circulated and Members were invited to comment on the document. Members raised the following issues:

4.4 Objective 1 – “...increasingly encourage other agencies to share information with us...” - need to strengthen the wording as the Service already collaborates with other agencies and will continue to do so as much as possible.

4.5 Objective 4 – should the Environment Agency be mentioned specifically or was it enough to include it in ‘other agencies’?

4.6 Objective 5 – would it be possible to recycle water when having drill practices? ACFO Hanks explained that due to health and safety regulations it was becoming increasingly difficult to recycle water. However, as part of the work for the new station in Wrexham, research is being conducted to look at different ways of using water. Also, when an incident occurs near a river, the water is sourced from there.

4.7 Objective 6 – “roll-out of an agreed Single Equality Scheme that helps to protect people from being disadvantaged unfairly on account of their .....” request to add the Welsh language to the list.

4.8 **RESOLVED to note:**

- (i) **that the Combined Improvement and Risk Reduction Plan will be circulated at a later date;**
- (ii) **the first draft of the consultation document and that amendments will be made following the issues discussed above, and that the final version will be presented to the Authority meeting in June.**

## 5 PERFORMANCE MONITORING

- 5.1 The performance monitoring document was presented to inform Members about the activity and performance of the North Wales Fire and Rescue Service.
- 5.2 The Deputy Chief Fire Officer informed Members that the figures presented had been audited and covered the period between September and December 2009. The Deputy Chief Fire Officer highlighted the following issues:
- 5.3 There had been a steady decline in areas such as accidental dwelling fires and those that had resulted in death or injury, Officers believe that this was due in part to the additional work undertaken in community safety.
- 5.4 There had been a slight rise in chimney fires, and the Service continues to highlight the dangers of unswept chimneys.
- 5.5 It was pleasing to note that there had been a continued reduction in accidental fires, which Officers believe was partly attributed to the amount of work undertaken in this area.
- 5.6 There had been a slight increase in fires confined to room of origin, and a reduction in injuries. There was however a significant increase in fires being attended at premises where smoke detectors were not working or not present at all. It seemed to be that the Service was attending fires in homes where people were less safety conscious and although the home fire safety checks (HFSCs) was proving to be successful, the Service needed to concentrate on targeting those that are less conscious about their own safety.
- 5.7 Cllr M LI Davies asked about false alarms from automatic fire alarms (AFAs) and whether it was possible to not attend if they were occurring at the same premises time and time again. ACFO Claydon confirmed that the Service was pro-active in dealing with some of the bigger premises, for example, Bangor University who had set up a system to issue fines to students who caused alarms to go off unnecessarily. The Chief Fire Officer informed Members that in 2007, the Authority had discussed following the same course of action as Oxfordshire who also received numerous AFA calls due to the number of educational establishments. Their solution was to not attend AFAs unless a 999 call was also made. At the time, the Authority had considered following that route, but had decided to follow the CFOA Code of Practice instead.
- 5.8 Cllr Davies proposed that a report be submitted to the next meeting of the Executive Panel to consider whether or not Oxfordshire's procedure would be suitable for use in North Wales. This proposal was seconded by Cllr T Roberts.
- 5.9 **RESOLVED to:**
- (i) **note the information provided in the performance monitoring report; and**
  - (ii) **request a report on the automatic fire alarm procedure used in Oxfordshire.**

## 6 INTEGRATED PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT SYSTEM (IPDS) AND PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT RECORDS (PDRs)

6.1 The report was presented to inform Members of the arrangements for the recording of safe and competent performance of firefighters. The system of recording training provided to firefighters has been established for a number of years and featured in the Service's framework and staff handbook. It was noted that PDRs had featured significantly in the HSE inspection report.

6.2 The IPDS was adopted as the Fire and Rescue Service national development strategy in 2001. As a quality assurance system IPDS also satisfied good practice guidance on learning and development as contained in the Health and Safety Executive document 'Successful Health and Safety Management' HSG(65).

6.3 In 2009-2010 the Service invested in e-learning and an electronic web based Personal Development Recording System known as PDRPro was purchased. The system was designed with the assistance of the Fire and Rescue Service to meet all the requirements of IPDS. The HSE noted that the Service had made progress through the internal audit process and the intended further roll out of PDRPro. The amount of money invested in the electronic systems was less than the cost of buying numerous copies of the handbooks.

6.4 The LearnPro element had been rolled out to all wholetime stations and the personnel on those stations. Firefighters were able to access their own records and were able to access the system via the internet, this met with previous requests from firefighters to be able to access such a system from home.

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

## 7 HEALTH AND SAFETY INSPECTION ACTION PLAN

7.1 The report was presented to inform Members about the proposed action plan developed by the Service to meet the recommendations and comments from the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) following its inspection and subsequent report on the Service.

7.2 ACFO Claydon explained that as well as the recommendations, the HSE had made some specific observations on other matters and an action plan had been drawn up to deal with those comments as well. It was hoped that all actions will be completed by August 2010.

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

## 8 AERIAL LADDER PLATFORM (ALP) ATTENDANCE STANDARD

8.1 The report was submitted to request a decision from Members on whether or not to re-visit the 20-minute attendance standard adopted by the Authority in relation to ALPs.

8.2 The ALP located at Wrexham fire station would be reaching the end of its serviceable life in 2010; this presented Members with an opportunity to review

the attendance standard as per the Authority's resolution in 2006. If the Authority decided to adopt a 30-minute attendance standard the number of aerial appliances in North Wales could be reduced.

- 8.3 The RRP working group had discussed the ALP issue at length and received information on the background to the issues, the deployment history of this resource, the consequences on the revenue budget of a new purchase and the predicted cost of a replacement ALP of circa £600,000. The information had also been made available to all Members of the Executive Panel.
- 8.4 In response to a Member's question, it was confirmed that there would be no reduction in staffing if it was decided not to replace the fourth ALP.
- 8.5 **RESOLVED, UNANIMOUSLY, to:**
- (i) agree to recommend to the Authority a change in the attendance standard to 30 minutes and as a consequence the non-replacement of the ALP; and**
  - (ii) Members requested a report advising of the potential locations for the remaining ALPs at the June Authority meeting.**

## 9 RHYL COMMUNITY FIRE STATION

- 9.1 The report was presented to make Members aware that Rhyl Community Fire Station had now been in existence for 18 months. It was the first of its type in Wales and the original idea had been to transform a traditional operational fire station into a proactive, community orientated station which focused on community engagement. As the Assembly had contributed towards the cost of the station it had made it more cost effective rather than merely updating the fire station.
- 9.2 The Deputy Chief Fire Officer explained that a report was currently being prepared to provide information about partnership arrangements, community engagement, occupancy rates and the income generation of the station. Members were invited to consider what additional information they wanted to be included in the report. It was confirmed that the report would be shared with the Assembly and the Chief Fire Officer advised that he would ensure it was placed on the agenda for a future meeting between the Minister, Chairs and Chief Fire Officers to indicate the success of the venture.
- 9.3 Assistant Chief Fire Officer Hanks informed Members that he was in the early stages of organising a concert with a male voice choir performing at Rhyl Community Fire Station to be held on 12<sup>th</sup> November. The proceeds would be donated to the Firefighters Charity.
- 9.4 **RESOLVED to:**
- (i) hold the next meeting of the Executive Panel at the Community Fire Station; and**
  - (ii) note the intention to present the progress report to the next meeting of the Executive Panel.**

## PART II

### 10 CAPITAL PROGRAMME

- 10.1 The report was presented to provide Members with an update on the Facilities Management Department's capital programme. Assistant Chief Fire Officer Hanks highlighted the following issues in the report.
- 10.2 There had been a delay with the Wrexham project. It was anticipated that the only expenditure incurred during 2010/11 would be on professional consultancy fees which would be recharged to NWFRS through WAST. It was proposed to transfer the surplus to planned capital maintenance works. The latest project programme indicated the new fire and ambulance station being completed in March 2012 subject to WAG approval being obtained by no later than July 2010.
- 10.3 A major electrical grid failure had occurred in Rhyl last year and the Uninterrupted Power Supply (UPS) unit and generator in the County Safety and Secondary Control Room Building failed to activate to provide temporary power. This caused a power loss to the ICT equipment rooms in the premises for 2 hours. A subsequent investigation of the building's infrastructure found that the UPS batteries had failed, it was also found that the UPS batteries life were being significantly curtailed due to the absence of an adequate air-conditioning system in the equipment room.
- 10.4 There was therefore a requirement to upgrade the infrastructure to the Secondary Control Room located in the County Safety Office building at Rhyl. The continuity of the Service's ICT and Secondary Control Room functions were reliant on this infrastructure working effectively. A detailed feasibility report had been prepared on the essential works which were estimated at £135,000.
- 10.5 **RESOLVED to:**
- (i) note the update regarding the capital programme;**
  - (ii) approve the transfer of £500,000 from the Wrexham fire station project towards the costs of the infrastructure works at Rhyl and the planned capital maintenance works in the Service's buildings.**