

**NORTH WALES FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY
EXECUTIVE PANEL**

Minutes of the Executive Panel Meeting of the North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority held on 15th November 2010 at Fire and Rescue Headquarters, St Asaph. Meeting commenced at 2pm.

PRESENT

Cllr S Frobisher (Chair)	Denbighshire County Council
Cllr L W Davies	Anglesey County Council
Cllr M LI Davies	Denbighshire County Council
Cllr B Dunn	Flintshire County Council
Cllr G C Evans	Denbighshire 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); K Finch (Treasurer); B Davies (Monitoring Officer); C Hanks, P Claydon and R Simmons (Assistant Chief Fire Officers); G Griffiths (Senior Fire Safety Manager); G Brandrick (Senior Operations Manager); R Fairhead (Senior Development Manager); L Roberts (Control Manager); S Morris (Corporate Planning Manager); T Williams (Corporate Communications Manager); G Jones (Executive Support Manager); A Davies (Member Liaison Officer).

OBSERVERS:

Cllr E C George	Wrexham County Borough Council
Ms C Blomeley	Independent Member - Standards Committee

Apologies:

Cllr T Evans	Wrexham County Borough Council
Cllr G James	Flintshire County Council
Cllr W T Owen	Gwynedd Council
D Docx	Deputy Chief Fire Officer
C Everett	Clerk to the Authority

1 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

1.1 None.

2 MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 20TH SEPTEMBER 2010

2.1 The minutes of the meeting held on 20th September were approved as a true and correct record.

3 MATTERS ARISING

3.1 There were no matters arising.

4 BUDGET OPTIONS 2011/12

4.1 The Chief Fire Officer introduced the report and passed on the Deputy Chief Fire Officer's apologies as she was unable to attend the meeting. The report provided an update on the current situation in respect of the 2011/12 budget and gave the Executive Panel feedback from the Budget Development Working Group which met on 8th October.

4.2 The Welsh Assembly Government will be publishing its draft budget on 17th November. The Chair and the Chief Fire Officer had met with the Minister on 9th November and it had been confirmed by the Minister that the fire and rescue service would not be protected in the budget.

4.3 Following the Budget Development Working Group meeting on 8th October a booklet of options on budget reductions has been produced and will be distributed to Members week commencing 22nd November. The Chief Fire Officer reiterated that the budget booklet did not contain proposals but rather a range of options with costs attached to them. Members will have an opportunity to consider the various options prior to the extraordinary meeting of the Fire and Rescue Authority arranged for 10th December when Members will have a more informed discussion prior to making decisions.

4.4 Members of the working group had reiterated that support staff should not be cut before the frontline options are considered but rather that they should be reduced in proportion to the core service for which they provide support.

4.5 The Treasurer provided background information about the budget debates that are taking place across Wales and that the budget announcement on 17th November will provide headline information only. The announcement on 23rd November will provide more specific information, however, the Assembly Government will not finalise its budget until January 2011.

4.6 The Treasurer explained that the Revenue Support Grant settlements are merely indicators, which the Assembly Government can adjust by quantum as well as the value of each part.

4.7 Cllr Owen was of the view that the Authority had a duty to provide a safe environment and to respond to emergencies, he therefore did not feel it was appropriate to be discussing problems constituent authorities may face in contributing to the Fire and Rescue Authority. Cllr M LI Davies also reminded Members that their responsibility was to the Fire and Rescue Authority and North Wales as a whole and not their constituent authorities.

4.8 In response to a question from Cllr Thomas about Phoenix, the Chief Fire Officer confirmed that the project was part of the children and young people

strategy and therefore he hoped that it would be funded for the foreseeable future.

- 4.9 **RESOLVED to note the information provided and that the full budget Reduction Options booklet will be made available prior to the Extraordinary Authority meeting in December.**

5 PERFORMANCE MONITORING 1ST APRIL TO 30TH SEPTEMBER 2010

5.1 The report was presented to inform Members about the performance of North Wales Fire and Rescue Service in the first half of the 2010/11 reporting year, which covered the period from 1st April to 30th September 2010.

5.2 Shân Morris led Members through the document and highlighted the following:

5.3 When compared to the same period last year there had been an overall increase of 3% in the number of fires attended, but this was mainly attributable to the 19% increase in secondary fires and masked the 16% decrease in primary fires. The number of secondary fires had been particularly high in the first quarter of this year.

5.4 Although there was a 13% decrease in fires in non-domestic properties, it was important not to be complacent about such fires and that work should continue to drive down this figure.

5.5 There had been a small decrease in the number of accidental dwelling fires. 91% of these fires had been confined to the room in which they had first started, and 6% of them had resulted in injuries requiring treatment beyond first aid or advice to seek a medical check as a precaution.

5.6 There was a working smoke alarm present in 65% of all dwelling fires that the Service had attended in the first half year, compared to 50% in the same period last year.

5.7 The Chief Fire Officer highlighted the success of community fire safety work which was evident in the graph showing the presence of smoke alarms in dwellings where a fire had occurred. Last year's results had been affected by the introduction of a new national data collection system, but since 2006 when the Service started fitting smoke alarms there had been a decrease over the five years from 32% to 15% of dwelling fires attended where there was no smoke alarm.

5.8 There were three different categories of false alarms - malicious (hoax), those generated by an electronic system (automatic fire alarm (AFAs)) and those made with good intent. A 16% reduction in the number of malicious false alarms attended reflected the effectiveness of control operators identifying such calls and challenging suspicious callers.

- 5.9 In terms of false alarms from AFAs and those made with good intent, work had recently been completed nationally to improve the accuracy of the way these were categorised.
- 5.10 Previously most false alarms generated by electronic systems would have been categorised as 'false alarm – AFA', even if a human being had been responsible for passing on the message to the FRS. Now, if a person, on hearing the alarm sounding, incorrectly judges the situation and calls out the FRS because they genuinely believe that there is a fire, this could be categorised as a 'false alarm – good intent'.
- 5.11 This recategorisation was considered to be behind the 25% decrease in false alarms from AFAs in non-domestic properties and the 68% increase in false alarms made with good intent, when compared to the first 6 months of last year. However, analysis was being undertaken locally to ensure that the underlying trend in the number of AFA false alarms was being correctly interpreted.
- 5.12 Cllr M LI Davies praised the call handlers for being able to analyse calls and identify the malicious false alarm calls and thanked them for their continued good work.
- 5.13 **RESOLVED to note the information provided.**

PART II

- 6 CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2010/11
- 6.1 The report was presented to update Members on the Authority's capital programme for the estate.
- 6.2 Modernisation of Ynys Môn County Safety Office and extending the fire station at Llangefni has been completed. The official opening ceremony was held on 14th October 2010. Cllr M LI Davies thanked officers for the opportunity to visit the new station after the last Authority meeting. The Chief Fire Officer informed Members that a letter of thanks had been received from the Minister congratulating the Service on the building works undertaken there.
- 6.3 Land has been purchased from Gwynedd County Council to build a new station at Nefyn in 2011/12 subject to sufficient capital funding being available.
- 6.4 Those fire stations and premises that need to comply with the disability and equality legislation continue to be upgraded during 2010/11 to meet the requirements of the legislation as far as reasonably practicable. All the works to the 23 stations should therefore be completed by June 2011.
- 6.5 Work has been completed on the Secondary Control Room and ICT Equipment Room Infrastructure Works, Denbighshire County Safety Office, Rhyl.

- 6.6 A sum has been allocated towards much needed planned capital maintenance works in the Service's buildings and these works are currently ongoing.
- 6.7 ACFO Hanks provided information about the latest developments with the Wrexham tripartite project and confirmed that they were still seeking a suitable site. Although the outline business case had been approved by the Assembly, a full business case cannot be submitted prior to securing a site.
- 6.8 **RESOLVED to note the information provided.**