

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

Minutes of the meeting of North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority held on Monday 20<sup>th</sup> December 2010 at Council Chamber, Shire Hall, Mold. 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      |
| M Ll Davies            | Denbighshire County Council    |
| B Dunn                 | Flintshire 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 |
| G James                | Flintshire County Council      |
| P Jeffares             | Wrexham County Borough Council |
| D Mackie               | Flintshire County Council      |
| A Minshull             | Flintshire County Council      |
| T Roberts              | Gwynedd 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); R Fairhead (Training and Development Manager); G W Griffiths (Senior Fire Safety Manager); G Brandrick (Senior Operations Manager); L Roberts (Control Manager); S Morris (Corporate Planning Manager); T Williams (Corporate Communications 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**

| <b>Councillor</b> | <b>Representing</b>          |
|-------------------|------------------------------|
| L W Davies        | Anglesey County Council      |
| M Griffith        | Gwynedd Council              |
| E M Jones         | 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 |
| A Tansley         | Conwy County Borough Council |
| G Williams        | Denbighshire County Council  |

- 1 NOTICE OF URGENT MATTERS
  - 1.1 The Chair advised that no items had been submitted to the Clerk for consideration.
- 2 DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS
  - 2.1 There were no declarations of interest.
- 3 MINUTES
  - 3.1 The minutes of the Fire and Rescue Authority meeting held on 18<sup>th</sup> October 2010 were submitted for approval.
  - 3.2 **RESOLVED to approve the minutes as a true and correct record of proceedings.**
  - 3.3 The Welsh minutes of the Fire and Rescue Authority meeting held on 21<sup>st</sup> June 2010 were submitted for approval.
  - 3.4 **RESOLVED to approve the Welsh minutes of the meeting held on 21<sup>st</sup> June 2010 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 Chair's report listed meetings and events attended by Cllr S Frobisher and Cllr A M Jones in their capacity as Chair and Vice-Chair between 9<sup>th</sup> October and 10<sup>th</sup> December 2010.
  - 5.2 **RESOLVED to note the information provided.**
- 6 DRAFT BUDGET 2011-12
  - 6.1 The Treasurer introduced the report which presented proposals to the Authority in respect of the draft budget for 2011-12, the forecasts for 2012-13 and 2013-14, and set out the draft revenue budget, potential savings, the provisional contributions required by the Constituent Authorities and the draft capital programme.
  - 6.2 Members were informed that presentation of the Budget in Best Value format, the Treasury Management Annual Strategy and the Prudential Indicators had not been included due to time constraints and will be presented at a later date.
  - 6.3 The Treasurer summarised the decisions made by the Members at the Extraordinary meeting on 10<sup>th</sup> December 2010. The preferred option was to freeze the revenue budget at £32million over the next three years which would in reality mean cash savings of £2.45million, a reduction of 7.5% to be

evenly spread over the 3 years. This means a reduction in the budget of £800,000 in years 1, 2 and 3. Members had acknowledged that in order to achieve the savings, there had to be a change in service provision and that savings should come from packages across the whole Service. In year 1 the majority of savings would be achieved through the Officer Cover Review, an ongoing project previously agreed by the Authority. Having considered the options available, Members had agreed that, for years 2 and 3, the additional million saving would have to be found by changes to fire cover. Further information was requested on potential options including 'change of rostering system' which would provide the required savings whilst maintaining the current level of fire cover. However, it was recognised that this would result in having to reduce a number of firefighter posts which could not be achieved through retirement or natural wastage. Other savings agreed upon were to reduce various budget lines; reduce some Support Service posts; take £50,000 from Community Fire Safety; and not fund the YFA annual event.

- 6.4 In terms of the contribution from constituent authorities, the Treasurer explained that there was a possibility that the basis of calculating population estimates would change in the near future. Constituent authorities will be advised of the contribution required before 31<sup>st</sup> December 2010.
- 6.5 The draft capital programme for 2011/12 amounted to £3.8m of new spend and £5.7m rolled forward for schemes that had previously been approved. In relation to a question about the vehicle replacement programme, the Deputy Chief Fire Officer stated that the review of the vehicle replacement programme is ongoing. The Deputy Chief Fire Officer explained that she had met with the Fleet Manager and had discussed the extent of the risk of extending the lives of light vehicles and some appliances. It had been agreed to keep the vans for an extra year and defer ordering the water tenders for a year therefore reducing the revenue cost. The estimated outturn for capital expenditure in 2010/11 is £5m and it is proposed to finance this from borrowing.
- 6.6 Cllr George raised concerns about the capital budget and whether funding for planned projects was ringfenced or would the Authority need to borrow money to accommodate those in future years and if so, the Authority should consider its future plans carefully. The Treasurer explained that the majority of funding for these schemes was through prudential borrowing on the open market rather than leasing as had previously been done. The Chief Fire Officer clarified that the revenue costs of the capital programme are built into the revenue budget, therefore the proposed revenue budget includes the consequence of the capital programme.
- 6.7 The Chief Fire Officer went on to explain that the Wrexham tripartite project was a longstanding project in collaboration with the police and ambulance services. Although a reasonably significant amount of money has been expended on preparatory work, there is still no agreed site for the project. Due to the budget pressures that all emergency services are facing, the Chief Fire Officer advised Members that there may be a need to review the project.
- 6.8 Cllr George was content to support the recommendations as set out in the report, however, he felt that if there were significant changes to be made to

the budget before 15<sup>th</sup> February that the full Authority should be reconvened, and other Members agreed with him.

6.9 The Clerk informed Members about the funding for Dangerpoint. Its main funding comes from constituent authorities to pay for children to visit the centre. In 2009/10 the Authority had made a one-off contribution to Dangerpoint, however, the Authority usually only contributes by seconding staff and a small contribution to other running costs. It was noted that a sustainable financial plan is currently being drawn up for Dangerpoint.

6.10 **RESOLVED to**

- (i) approve the draft budget for 2011-12 and agree the level of reductions to be made to the revenue budget for the next three financial years;**
- (ii) approve the strategy to be followed to achieve the savings for 2011/12;**
- (iii) agree the strategy as set out in the report to be followed to achieve the savings in 2012/13 and 2013/14;**
- (iv) advise the Constituent Authorities of the provisional contributions required for 2011-12;**
- (v) approve the draft capital programme for 2011-12 and associated methods of financing;**
- (vi) agree that if any significant changes to the 2011/12 budget transpire, an extraordinary meeting of the Authority will be convened. Any minor changes will be resolved by the officers in consultation with the Chair or through the Executive Panel, under delegated authority, as necessary.**

7 PROVISIONAL OUTTURN 2010/11

7.1 The report informed Members of the estimated provisional revenue outturn for the financial year 2010-2011. The estimated underspend of £105,123 is being managed in year and may form part of reserves for 2011/12 to help underpin next year's budget. It was therefore recommended that Members merely note the underspend at this point.

7.2 The estimated underspend on retained firefighters is fairly modest at £83,000. Members were informed that the provisional outturn was based on current activity levels which are relatively low and if there are a number of major incidents over the next three months then the underspend could easily translate into an overspend.

7.3 In response to a question from Cllr M Thomas about retained firefighter recruitment, ACFO Simmons explained that more retained firefighters had been recruited in 2010-11 compared to the number that had left the Service. The Service is continuing to examine its recruitment processes in order to improve them.

- 7.4 At this point the Chief Fire Officer informed Members of the activity over the previous weekend due to the adverse weather conditions. Facilities had been created in the Joint Communications Centre to enable Silver Command to be set up near the operations floor operated within the Joint Communications Centre. This had again highlighted the benefit of being based in the JCC with the police control and had provided operational dividends.
- 7.5 **RESOLVED to note the estimated underspend of £105,123.**
- 8 REGIONAL PARTNERSHIP REVIEW
- 8.1 The Clerk informed Members about the Regional Partnership Review which has been set up by the public sector bodies in North Wales in order to rationalise the number of statutory partnerships and meetings. The police are leading on the review and further information will be provided in due course.
- 8.2 **RESOLVED to note the information provided.**
- 9 MEETING DATES 2011
- 9.1 Members were provided with dates of Authority, Executive Panel and Audit Committee meetings for 2011.
- 9.2 **RESOLVED to note the dates for meetings.**
- 10 MINUTES OF MEETINGS
- 10.1 The minutes of the Audit Committee meeting held on 27<sup>th</sup> September and Executive Panel meeting held on 15<sup>th</sup> November were submitted for information.
- 10.2 **RESOLVED to note the minutes.**
- 11 INFORMATIVE MAGAZINE
- 11.1 ACFO Hanks presented the latest version of the magazine.
- 11.2 **RESOLVED to accept the publication.**