

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

Minutes of the Executive Panel Meeting of the North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority held on 7th February 2011 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 G C Evans	Denbighshire 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 W T Owen	Gwynedd 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); C Everett (Clerk); C Hanks 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).

Apologies:

Cllr M LI Davies	Denbighshire County Council
Cllr B Dunn	Flintshire County Council
P Claydon	Assistant Chief Fire Officer

1 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

1.1 None.

2 URGENT ITEMS

2.1 The Chair had agreed to table an additional agenda item at the end of the meeting, - publication of the Annual Improvement Report.

3 MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 15TH NOVEMBER 2010

3.1 The minutes of the meeting held on 15th November were approved as a true and correct record subject to amending the beginning of paragraph 4.7 to "Cllr Owen was of the view".

4 MATTERS ARISING

4.1 There were no matters arising.

5 SUMMARY OF IMPROVEMENT AND RISK REDUCTION OBJECTIVES FOR 2011-12

5.1 The Deputy Chief Fire Officer introduced the report which summarised the RRP and improvement objectives for 2011-12.

5.2 In addition to the seven objectives contained in the current RRP/Improvement Plan, there will also be additional objectives that will arise directly from the decision to freeze the revenue budget at £32 million for the next three years. The DCFO summarised those objectives and explained the method by which progress against those objectives will be monitored. This will be through existing meetings of the Executive Panel and external monitoring will be undertaken as part of the Wales Audit Office's Improvement Audit.

5.3 The Clerk felt that several of the objectives were of a partnership nature and that they should be recognised at a regional level through the recently established Regional Partnership Board.

5.4 In relation to objective 7, "ensuring Business Continuity Management planning and management arrangements are as comprehensive and secure as can be", the Chief Fire Officer informed Members that during the bad weather the BCM arrangements had been severely tested and had worked very well. In addition, joint arrangements with the police which had emanated from the Joint Control facility had also been tested and had been successful.

5.5 Cllr Jeffares commented that during the bad weather he was very proud to read about the Fire and Rescue Service's involvement in assisting the public and other agencies and he asked that his sentiments be conveyed to staff.

5.6 **RESOLVED to note the agreed Improvement Objectives contained within Section 4 of the Combined Improvement and Risk Reduction Plan 2009-12 for the forthcoming year 2011-12.**

6 BUDGET 2011/12

6.1 The report was presented to confirm the revenue budget for 2011-12 and to advise Members how the budget will be monitored, managed and reported over the next three years given the additional constraints applied through the budget reduction strategy.

6.2 At the December meeting, the possibility of an additional meeting had been discussed depending if any major amendments arose from Welsh Assembly Government final settlement. However, the Deputy Chief Fire Officer had received confirmation from the Treasurer that only minor adjustments had been made to the Assembly's budget and that they did not affect the Fire and Rescue Service's budget. Therefore a standstill budget of £31,932,653

was confirmed, with savings of £802,000 needed in 2011/12 to achieve this figure.

6.3 The budget will require even more detailed financial management to mitigate the risk of slippage, and Managers will be carefully controlling the situation to ensure savings appear before the end of the financial year. Any issues of concern will be reported to Members as soon as practicably possible.

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

7 PERFORMANCE MONITORING APRIL TO DECEMBER 2010

7.1 The report provided information about the activity and performance of the North Wales Fire and Rescue Service between April and December 2010 and also compared performance with the same period in previous years. The Deputy Chief Fire Officer highlighted the following points:

7.2 Primary fires - decrease of 11% compared to same period in 2009/10.

7.3 Secondary fires - increase of 10% compared to same period in 2009/10. Members were informed by the Senior Fire Safety Manager that in addition to a grass fire campaign, the Service is also undertaking more preventative work with the farming community and potential offenders. Figures collated by the Arson Reduction Team, police and Community Safety Partnerships are analysed in order to effectively target susceptible areas. For example, educationalists are attending schools in areas identified as being at risk and emphasising the dangers of grass fires. As well as working with the Countryside Council for Wales, the Service has received funding from the Assembly to train firefighters on how to tackle large grass fires effectively and how to extinguish them in a more efficient manner.

7.4.1 Deaths from accidental fires in dwellings - during the first three quarters of the year there had been 7 deaths due to accidental fires in dwellings with three deaths resulting from one incident. When the CFO's Task Group Report was published in 2007, there had been 10 deaths during the previous year. Although the figures appear not to have decreased drastically in the last four years, the contributory factors identified in the Task Group report are still relevant to the majority of fire deaths and officers are confident that, through partnership working and the home fire safety checks campaign, the Service is doing all it can to prevent fire deaths and to educate the public about fire safety.

7.4.2 The Chief Fire Officer informed Members about the recent two fatal fire incidents, one in Holywell and one in Colwyn Bay. Both occupants were elderly, they had both received home fire safety checks, were known to various agencies and were connected to Careline.

7.4.3 It appeared that in some cases, even when the Service had provided as much support, advice and interventions as possible, some people remained oblivious to the fire safety message - this had been discussed with the Wales

Audit Office. Cllr A M Jones felt there should be a statistical category to recognise such cases.

- 7.5 The Chief Fire Officer stated that he was encouraged by ownership of smoke detectors, which had dramatically increased since 2006. Members agreed with this sentiment and Cllr T Roberts complimented officers on their work with other agencies.
- 7.6 More properties where fires had occurred had smoke alarms than in previous years; 15% of properties attended were without a smoke alarm. There was a concern about the number of properties that had smoke alarms that were not working because they had been tampered with or the batteries had been removed.
- 7.7 Attendance at road traffic collisions (RTCs) - the Service had changed its policy on attending RTCs and is now being notified of incidents when the other emergency services are notified and automatically sends an appliance to the scene. This does not happen in the other Fire and Rescue Services in Wales and therefore from a Wales Audit Office perspective affects the comparison of statistics between the three Fire and Rescue Services.
- 7.8 There is a continued reduction in the number of malicious fire alarms attended. There has been a large increase in false alarms made with good intent due to the new way of recording calls.
- 7.9 False alarms from Automatic Fire Alarms (AFAs) in non-domestic properties - down 21% - fire safety teams continue to work with premises that are known to cause problems to ensure they maintain their systems properly. The Chief Fire Officer commented that a consistent reduction in figures was needed to prove that the work is having a positive effect.
- 7.10 Shifts/days sickness - 0.62 fewer days/shifts were lost due to sickness per employee compared to 2009/10 - there has been an improvement in both long term and short term sickness. ACFO Simmons informed Members that a lot of work had been undertaken in this area as part of the corporate health gold standard. As well as occupational health, schemes are in place to provide support to staff such as critical incident debrief and colleague support scheme which can help deal with a whole range of issues that have a detrimental effect on health and welfare of staff. CFOA has recognised the work undertaken as being good practice.

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

8 PRESENTATION ON FLEET MANAGEMENT

- 8.1 Dave Bond, Fleet Manager, attended the meeting to give Members a presentation outlining the work undertaken by the Fleet Department.
- 8.2 The Fleet department and maintenance facility is based at Llandudno Junction, and in addition has mobile workshop vehicles to service and repair the fleet at stations. The department is responsible for all aspects of fleet

management including a full-time call out service and since 2010 the Fleet Manager has been responsible for the fuel and vehicle usage management.

- 8.3 The Department has a revenue and capital budget as follows:
- revenue budget (repair and maintenance) - £350k
 - revenue budget (fuel and oil) - £334k
 - capital budget that ranges from £1m-£5m.
- 8.4 The Department endeavours to make year on year savings and works in collaboration with the other Fire and Rescue Services in Wales in order to maximise funds.
- 8.5 The environment is at the centre of the Department's work with 70% of the appliances having exhaust filters that emit only clean air; speed limiters fitted to all fleet vehicles (since 2003) saving 8% on fuel economy and promoting a positive road safety example to other road users. The Department has a vehicle oil policy, which was developed to reduce waste, and trackers have been installed in every vehicle to reduce unnecessary journeys and improve vehicle availability.
- 8.6.1 Dave Bond informed Members of the challenges facing the Department in future, including:
- 8.6.2 Vehicles can have a lifespan of 20 years and it is difficult to manage adapting the older vehicles to new expectations such as a diverse workforce, increase payload of more equipment.
- 8.6.3 Fire appliances are carrying more equipment, which requires heavier / larger chassis to cope with the demand. This makes it difficult to keep the size of the vehicles compact.
- 8.6.4 Revenue pressures – whilst savings have been generated, much of this has been by efficiency savings or new ways of working. Fuel prices are increasing and if they continue to rise there will be a severe impact on the Service's budget.
- 8.7 Cllr T Roberts suggested that the Executive Panel visit the fleet workshop to see all the work that is undertaken there.
- 8.8 **RESOLVED to note the presentation.**

URGENT ITEM

- 9 PUBLICATION OF ANNUAL IMPROVEMENT REPORT
- 9.1 Shân Morris, Corporate Planning Manager, introduced the report which was published on the Auditor General's website on 31st January.
- 9.2 The report is a new annual requirement upon the Auditor General for Wales following the introduction of the Local Government Measure. The Wales

Audit Office is required to publish a report about how well public authorities are improving their services.

9.3 The report has suggested that the Authority should:

- “develop further the improvement objectives and associated performance and outcome measures so as to be able to identify and evaluate the impact of its activity for its community; and
- continue to prioritise road safety activities to better understand how it can play its part in making roads within its area safer.”

9.4 Members acknowledged that there were proposals rather than recommendations but were concerned about the second bullet point as the Authority’s role in making roads is safer is merely a contributory role not a primary role. It was agreed to state in the Authority’s response to the Wales Audit Office that Members were concerned about the Authority being judged in future for an area for which it has not got primary responsibility.

9.5 The Clerk confirmed that the report together with the response should be submitted to the full Authority meeting in March for information.

9.6 **RESOLVED to note the report, and for both the report and the Authority’s written response to the WAO be presented to the full Authority meeting in March.**