

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

Minutes of the Executive Panel Meeting of the North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority held on 19th September 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 M Ll Davies	Denbighshire County Council
Cllr G C Evans	Denbighshire County 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 J R Skelland	Wrexham County Borough Council
Cllr M Thomas	Conwy County Borough Council

ALSO PRESENT:

S A Smith (Chief Fire Officer and Chief Executive); C Everett (Clerk); K Finch (Treasurer); D Docx (Deputy Chief Fire Officer); P Claydon, C Hanks and R Simmons (Assistant Chief Fire Officers); G Brandrick (Senior Operations Manager); S Morris (Corporate Planning Manager); T Williams (Corporate Communications Manager); S Teal-Bromley (Executive Support Manager); C Dingle (Finance Manager); A Davies (Member Liaison Officer).

Apologies:

Cllr B Dunn	Flintshire County Council
Cllr W T Owen	Gwynedd Council
Cllr W P Roberts	Conwy County Borough Council
Sandra Forrest	Principal Accountant - Conwy County Borough Council

1 NOTICE OF URGENT MATTERS

- 1.1 Two urgent items had been submitted to the Chair for consideration, as follows:
- update regarding Maritime Incident Response Group (part I item)
 - briefing from Chief Fire Officer about the registration of a trade dispute by the FBU and business continuity arrangements (part II item).

2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

- 2.1 None.

- 3 MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 18TH JULY 2011
- 3.1 The minutes of the meeting held on 18th July were approved as a correct record.
- 4 MATTERS ARISING
- 4.1 None.
- 5 BUDGET OPTIONS 2012-13
- 5.1 The report was presented to finalise the recommendations to the Fire and Rescue Authority following the budget options appraisal carried out by the Risk Reduction Working Group.
- 5.2 A small working group of Members had met several times to discuss the various budget options available in order to deal with the financial constraints facing the Authority. The Chief Fire Officer reminded Members that a firm decision was required by the full Authority at its October meeting in order to maximise the time available for the changes to be fulfilled; any delay could mean not meeting the full extent of savings required.
- 5.3 The Deputy Chief Fire Officer reminded Members of the Authority's decision at its meeting on 10th December 2010 to make savings of £800,000 per year over three years, and for the savings to be made from across the Service. The savings in the first year (2011-12) had been achieved through the officer cover review, reduction in community safety, support staff posts and ceasing some of the non-statutory duties.
- 5.4 ACFO Hanks informed Members that work continued behind the scenes to ensure services were delivered as effectively as possible. There were a number of areas where joint arrangements with other organisations were in place, for example the on-call press officers and the Joint Communications Centre. As Chair of the Sustainable Development Board, ACFO Hanks confirmed that the Board was looking at ways of minimising the consumption and cost of energy, water and fuel.
- 5.5 ACFO Claydon explained that the options listed in the report had been explored in-depth by the Working Group and Members were keen to acknowledge the impact of the options on services and staff. Of the five options listed, four would mean diminishing fire cover in some way, either by removal of pumps or by having to increase the response time. Option 6 (i) in the report was the only option that would not reduce the level of service delivered to the public.
- 5.6 ACFO Simmons explained that each option presented challenges and risks, and that there were common themes from a HR and employment law perspective. ACFO Simmons clarified issues about early retirement and compulsory and voluntary retirement. It was noted that Principal Officers conduct station visits on a regular basis and have been discussing budget matters with the wider workforce for over a year. In terms of the Equality Act,

ACFO Simmons explained that equality impact assessments have been initiated for each option and confirmed that the Authority is meeting its legal obligation as the process continues.

- 5.7 The Treasurer was content with the work that had been done to identify ways of meeting the savings required and the Clerk felt that it was important for Members to have the agreed framework and criteria at the forefront of their minds when discussing budget issues. Both the Treasurer and the Clerk felt that the equality impact assessments were an important part of the work.
- 5.8 Cllr T Roberts commented that he had attended several meetings of the Working Group and that Members had looked at all kinds of options and had long discussions about them. The Working Group's main concern was to protect service provision offered to the public, and therefore Cllr Roberts proposed option 6 (i). He emphasised the importance of negotiations between the Service and representative unions. The Chief Fire Officer confirmed that discussions with the unions were continuing and that he was confident that both sides would work together to reach a mutually acceptable decision.
- 5.9 The Chair also commented about the extensive process of the Working Group and that redundancy was a regrettable option. Cllr J V Owen seconded Cllr Roberts' proposal that the Executive Panel recommend option 6 (i) to the full Authority meeting on 17th October.
- 5.10 **RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY to**
- (i) note the detailed work undertaken by the Risk Reduction Working Group;**
 - (ii) note the preference of that Working Group - to see the savings achieved by a negotiated agreement on changes to the system of rostering crews;**
 - (iii) further note that there are risks associated with that option;**
 - (iv) recognise that decisions need to be taken no later than the Fire and Rescue Authority meeting on 17th October 2011 in order to give enough time for those changes to be implemented;**
 - (v) note that the Authority will expect a strong recommendation from the Executive Panel;**
 - (vi) endorse the preferred option of the Risk Reduction Working Group and that this endorsement is conveyed to the full Authority on the 17th October 2011;**
 - (vii) note that the requirement to make the necessary savings in the financial year 2012-13 may result in the need to implement some or all of the other budget options considered by the Risk Reduction Working Group should it be impossible to achieve agreement over the preferred option.**

At this juncture, Cllr J V Owen had to leave to attend another meeting. The Chief Fire Officer reported on the MIRG urgent item before Cllr Owen left the meeting.

- 6 URGENT ITEM: MARITIME INCIDENT RESPONSE GROUP (MIRG)
- 6.1 The Chief Fire Officer updated Members about the MIRG situation. At its March 2011 meeting the Authority had been informed that the Maritime and Coastguard Agency (MCA) had to reduce its budget by 2015 and that MIRG joint training and Memorandum of Understanding with Fire and Rescue Authorities was one of the areas under threat. The Authority had agreed to continue to fund MIRG until the outcome of the Transport Select Committee enquiry was known. The Chief Fire Officer had now received a letter from the MCA which stated that following the enquiry it could no longer support the Memorandum of Understanding with the MIRG facility, and would be withdrawing from the project on 14th December 2011.
- 6.2 Cllr J V Owen and other Members expressed disappointment at this decision and the Chief Fire Officer confirmed that he would be writing to the MCA to express the strong view of the Authority.
- 6.3 **RESOLVED to note the information provided.**
- 7 RESPONSE TO THE PUBLIC CONSULTATION ON NWFRA'S IMPROVEMENT OBJECTIVES FOR 2012-13
- 7.1 The Corporate Planning Manager presented the results of the consultation held over the summer months. Following the Executive Panel's agreement, the consultation process had been simplified and a different approach had been adopted. A leaflet asking for views about the 8 objectives was circulated to staff and the public was also invited to respond to the consultation. 56 responses had been received and of those 52% had stated that they lived in North Wales. On the whole, all the objectives were supported and some positive comments and suggestions had been made.
- 7.2 **RESOLVED to note the information.**
- 8 CONTENT OF THE COMBINED IMPROVEMENT PLAN AND RISK REDUCTION PLAN 2010/11 TO 2012/13
- 8.1 The Deputy Chief Fire Officer presented the report which sought Members' endorsement of a proposed structure for the draft Combined Improvement and Risk Reduction Plan 2010-13 that will be presented for approval to the full Fire and Rescue Authority meeting on 17th October 2011.
- 8.2 Members were also asked to note because of the timing of decisions, the Authority's strategy for making savings in 2012-13 will need to be written in to Section 4 of the Combined Plan after the full Authority meeting on 17th October 2011 but before the statutory publication deadline of 31st October 2011.
- 8.3 **RESOLVED to**
(i) endorse the intention to maintain the same structure for the Combined Improvement and Risk Reduction Plan 2010-13 as the previous year's Combined Plan, but with updated information;

- (ii) **note the need to include in the Combined Plan a summary of the full Fire and Rescue Authority's decision(s) regarding the 2012/13 budget options; and**
- (iii) **agree the arrangements it proposes to adopt for approving the wording of this section of the Combined Plan after the Authority meeting on 17th October 2011 and before the statutory deadline of 31st October 2011.**

9 PERFORMANCE MONITORING

- 9.1 The Deputy Chief Fire Officer presented the performance monitoring report for April - June 2011. Performance had been better across all areas in the first three months of the current financial year compared to the same period last year.
- 9.2 There had been a 21% decrease in the number of secondary fires, and this could be attributed to the work that had been done in February with the farming community and landowners regarding grassland and outdoor fires.
- 9.3 Further work had been undertaken to find out why smoke alarms did not actuate when smoke was present. In about 50% of cases the smoke alarm had been disabled, but in most of the other cases the alarm had not actuated as the fire had been in a different part of the property. Cllr M Ll Davies asked whether it was possible to add a column to the report to show this in future.
- 9.4 **RESOLVED to note the information provided.**

10 STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS

- 10.1 The Treasurer presented the report which gave the Executive Panel an opportunity to comment on the audited Statement of Accounts for 2010-11 prior to them being presented to the Audit Committee for approval.
- 10.2 **RESOLVED to note the Statement of Accounts for 2010-11 and there were no comments to be referred to the Audit Committee.**

11 WELSH LANGUAGE BOARD MONITORING REPORT

- 11.1 ACFO Hanks presented the report which asked Members to approve the North Wales Fire and Rescue Service Welsh Language Scheme Monitoring Report for 2010-11 prior to formal submission to the Welsh Language Board.
- 11.2 Cllr L W Davies congratulated everyone involved with promoting the Welsh language and felt it was important for the public to be able to contact the Service in their preferred language. He was also pleased with the Service's commitment in giving everyone the opportunity to learn Welsh through the level 1 and 2 tests. This was reiterated by other Members.

- 11.3 **RESOLVED to note the progress made in relation to the Welsh Language Scheme and approve the 2010-11 Monitoring Report prior to formal submission to the Welsh Language Board.**

PART II

12 POTENTIAL INDUSTRIAL ACTION FOR FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICES IN THE UK

- 12.1 The Chief Fire Officer advised Members of a planned “day of action” by public sector trade unions, expected to take place on 30th November 2011. Although formal notification was yet to be received, it is possible that the Fire Brigades Union, UNISON and UNITE would be taking part. The Chief Fire Officer then briefed Members on the Authority’s Business Continuity arrangements in the event of industrial action.
- 12.2 **RESOLVED to note the information provided.**