

NORTH WALES FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY

Minutes of the meeting of North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority held on Monday 17th October 2011 at Siambwr Dafydd Orwig Chamber, Caernarfon. Meeting commenced at 10.30am.

PRESENT

Councillor	Representing
S Frobisher (Chair)	Denbighshire County Council
A M Jones (Vice-Chair)	Anglesey County Council
D Barratt	Flintshire County Council
L W Davies	Anglesey County Council
M LI Davies	Denbighshire County Council
B Dunn	Flintshire County Council
G C Evans	Denbighshire County Council
P C Evans	Conwy County Borough Council
E C George	Wrexham County Borough Council
M Griffith	Gwynedd Council
P Jeffares	Wrexham County Borough Council
E M Jones	Gwynedd Council
J A Kelly	Wrexham County Borough Council
D Mackie	Flintshire County Council
W T Owen	Gwynedd Council
R E Parry	Conwy County Borough Council
T Roberts	Gwynedd Council
W P Roberts	Conwy County Borough Council
A Tansley	Conwy County Borough Council
M Thomas	Conwy County Borough Council
G O Williams	Gwynedd Council

Also present:

S A Smith (Chief Fire Officer and Chief Executive); C P Everett (Clerk and Monitoring Officer 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); G W Griffiths (Senior Fire Safety Manager); S Morris (Corporate Planning Manager); T Williams (Corporate Communications Manager); S Forrest (Accountant, Treasurer's Department, Conwy County Borough Council); A Davies (Member Liaison Officer) and S Jones (Member Liaison Assistant).

APOLOGIES

Councillor	Representing
G James	Flintshire County Council
D Kelly	Wrexham County Borough Council
N M Jones	Flintshire County Council
A Minshull	Flintshire County Council
J V Owen	Anglesey County Council
J R Skelland	Wrexham County Borough Council

1 DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

1.1 None.

2 NOTICE OF URGENT MATTERS

2.1 ACFO Colin Hanks announced that he had given formal notice of his intention to retire on 31st March 2012.

2.2 The Chief Fire Officer asked Members if they were willing to hold the March meeting of the Authority at Caernarfon in honour of ACFO Hanks starting his career with the Service in Gwynedd.

2.3 **RESOLVED to hold the Authority meeting scheduled for 19th March 2012 in the Council Chamber at Caernarfon, subject to its availability.**

3 MINUTES

3.1 The minutes of the Fire and Rescue Authority meeting held on 20th June 2011 were submitted for approval.

3.2 **RESOLVED to approve the minutes 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 capacities as Chair and Vice-Chair between 20th June and 7th October 2011.

5.2 Cllr T Roberts congratulated everyone involved with the Awards Ceremony held at Rhyl Fire Station. The Chief Fire Officer thanked Members who attended the Ceremony and Cllr M Thomas expressed disappointment at the low number of Members that attended.

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

6 LOCATING ALPs

6.1 ACFO Claydon presented the report which recommended that the Authority deferred its decision on the future location of the Service's three ALPs pending clarification of future crewing.

6.2 The Authority had previously been informed that one of the four ALPs would be reaching the end of its serviceable life in April 2012 and it had been agreed to review the locations for the three remaining ALPs. However, due to the current continuing debate on budget reduction and potential impact on

operational options, it was considered prudent to defer the decision until the March 2012 meeting.

6.3 **RESOLVED to note the report and defer the decision on the locating of ALPs until the Authority's meeting in March 2012,**

7 BUDGET OPTIONS 2012-13

7.1 The report was presented in order for Members to decide on the means of achieving £1 million of savings during 2012/13 and 2013/14, following the budget options appraisal carried out by the Risk Reduction Working Group and the meeting of the Executive Panel held on the 19th September 2011.

7.2 The Chief Fire Officer reminded Members that they had previously decided to save £2.4million spread evenly over 3 years. The RRP Working Group effectively became the Budget Options Working Group and held several meetings to consider all options available. The option of changing the rostering emerged as the preferred option as it was an alternative to removing fire appliances or stations. Discussions had already commenced with the FBU as there would be a 4% reduction in firefighter posts. The Service has good industrial relations locally with the FBU and Officers are hopeful that discussions will progress on an open and transparent basis. The Chief Fire Officer emphasised that it was a very regrettable situation for both sides but that it was unavoidable due to the current economic climate. Significant savings have already been made during the current year.

7.3 The Treasurer echoed the Chief Fire Officer's comments and advised that in terms of financial planning if Members were unable to achieve the savings required within the timescale, the savings would be even harder to achieve in future years. Members had to determine what was proper and right for the North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority.

7.4 The Deputy Chief Fire Officer spoke about the options contained in the report and the associated risks and challenges with each option. All options bar one would mean that the public would see a reduction in service in their area, therefore based on that information the Executive Panel recommended that the Authority should consider the rostering option which would see a reduction of between 22 and 36 posts but no reduction in service. The FBU was aware of the different variations of rostering that were being considered and it was recognised that although there would be a change to firefighters' working practices, there would still be the same number of fire appliances and stations.

7.5 The Chair confirmed that the RRP Working Group had met on several occasions and that the Executive Panel had received regular updates. She stated that it was with regret the issue of redundancy was being discussed but Members were keen to maintain the service to the public. Cllr T Roberts stated that there was a history of good relations between trade unions and officers in North Wales and was pleased that discussions had already started.

- 7.6 ACFO Simmons explained about voluntary and compulsory redundancies and the national position. Due to the low number of ill health retirements and dismissals and individuals choosing to stay after completing their 30 years service, it was difficult to predict the number of retirements, which therefore resulted in having to consider voluntary/compulsory redundancies. With the Local Government Pension Scheme there have been national discussions to agree enhance redundancy packages but no such agreement exists for the firefighters' pension scheme. If compulsory redundancies were required the Authority would have to follow a statutory process.
- 7.7 The Chief Fire Officer reminded Members of the need to protect the statutory position of the Authority and once a decision has been taken on compulsory redundancies, the Authority automatically enters the statutory process regarding negotiations on redundancies.
- 7.8 Cllr W T Owen expressed concern about taking a decision without knowing the view of firefighters and union representatives about the situation. The Deputy Chief Fire Officer reassured Members that the budget options work has been discussed regularly at scheduled meetings with the FBU and that Principal Officers, when attending station visits, have been discussing the budget situation with firefighters. The Unions recognise that all parties need to work together to find a way of introducing rostering that can work to the best advantage of the firefighters, the Service and the public.
- 7.9 Cllr P C Evans was concerned that by reducing the number of posts, there would also be a reduction in the pool of opportunity for promotions within North Wales. Cllr Evans said he was not aware of the work that had gone into the options process but felt that little thought had been given to making savings on the support staff side; he also felt that public sector organisations were burdened with structures imposed by local government to generate unnecessary posts. The Chief Fire Officer reiterated the fact that a lot of work had been done on the various options including the relevance of support staff posts within the organisation.
- 7.10 Cllr E C George agreed with the earlier sentiments about the good relations with the Unions and the desire not to make people redundant, however, through the RRP working group and the Executive Panel there was a recommendation that would save money but maintain service delivery. Therefore Cllr George proposed that the recommendations as detailed in the report be supported. Cllr Mackie seconded Cllr George's proposals and stated that although she was not on the Executive Panel or the working group she had spoken to members of those committees and was aware of the thorough work that had been done to reach this decision and had confidence in the councillors on those committees.
- 7.11 The Vice Chair acknowledged the sadness of the situation but considered it was important that the ongoing discussions with the Unions proceeded with sensitivity and that the legal process was duly followed.

- 7.12 **RESOLVED to**
- (i) note the detailed work undertaken by the Risk Reduction Working Group;
 - (ii) note the preference of that Working Group and the recommendations of the Executive Panel that the savings be 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 at this Fire and Rescue Authority meeting in order to give enough time for those changes to be implemented;
 - (v) endorse the unanimous preferred option of the Executive Panel that the savings should be achieved by a negotiated agreement on changes to the system of rostering crews;
 - (vi) 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.

Vote details: 15 in favour, 1 against and 5 abstentions.

8 COMBINED IMPROVEMENT PLAN (IP) AND RISK REDUCTION PLAN (RRP) 2010-13

8.1 The report was presented to ask Members to approve the draft Combined Improvement and Risk Reduction Plan 2010-11 to 2012-13 prior to its publication on 31st October 2011.

8.2 **RESOLVED to approve the draft Combined Improvement and Risk Reduction Plan 2010-13 for completion, adoption and publication before the statutory deadline of 31st October 2011.**

9 COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

9.1 The Senior Fire Safety Manager presented the report which provided information about the Community Engagement activities conducted over the summer of 2011 and their importance in publicising fire safety, contributing to the Authority's compliance with the Equality Act 2010 and shaping the services to be delivered in the future.

9.2 Cllr M Griffith congratulated the Service on the work being done and commented that she had visited the stand at the National Eisteddfod, and felt the activities offered were a good way of interacting with children to help them to grow into responsible citizens. Cllr Griffith asked for assurance that a similar stand would be at the Urdd Eisteddfod due to be held in Glynllifon in May 2012. The Senior Fire Safety Manager confirmed that plans were in place to have a stand at the Eisteddfod. Cllr M Davies echoed Cllr Griffith's comments and congratulated the Service on the work done with schools and the staff's commitment to the work.

9.3 **RESOLVED to note the report which provided evidence of engagement with the members of the community as part of the Service's prevention strategy.**

10 PROVISIONAL OUTTURN 2011-12

10.1 The Treasurer presented the report which provided information about the estimated provisional outturn for the financial year 2011-2012. The report showed that there was a projected underspend of £296,027.

10.2 Cllr M LI Davies congratulated officers on managing the budget so well. Cllr G C Evans enquired about the nature of subscriptions and it was confirmed that these were to cover membership to various professional organisations such as to receive legal information from Chief Fire Officers' Association and Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA).

10.3 **RESOLVED to note the estimated underspend.**

11 TREASURY MANAGEMENT AND PRUDENTIAL INDICATORS

11.1 The Treasurer presented the report as it was a requirement of the CIPFA Prudential Code for Capital Finance that Prudential Indicators were monitored on a regular basis and any significant changes approved by the Fire and Rescue Authority. Similarly, under the CIPFA Code of Practice on Treasury Management any changes in long term borrowing and changes to the Authority's counterparties have to be reported to the Fire and Rescue Authority.

11.2 **RESOLVED to**

- (i) **approve the amended Prudential Indicators;**
- (ii) **note the Counterparties;**
- (iii) **note the new loan.**

12 MARITIME INCIDENT RESPONSE GROUP (MIRG) UPDATE

12.1 ACFO Claydon presented the report which gave Members an update on the latest developments with regard to the Maritime Incident Response Group (MIRG). Members were also asked to acknowledge the Maritime and Coastguard Agency's (MCA) withdrawal from the provision.

12.2 Members were concerned about the withdrawal of the provision and Cllr M Thomas felt it should be kept as an insurance policy especially with more cruise ships expected at Holyhead in future.

12.3 The Chief Fire Officer informed Members that the Authority does not have a statutory obligation to fight fires at sea; he also considered it to be an extremely regrettable decision by the government, but could only advise the Authority to withdraw the provision as it was untenable without financial support.

12.4 **RESOLVED to**

- (i) **note the contents of the report.**
- (ii) **acknowledge the MCA's withdrawal from the MoU; and as a consequence**
- (iii) **withdraw from the MIRG provision.**

13 NATIONAL PUBLIC SERVICES LEADERSHIP BOARD AND COMPACT FOR COLLABORATION

13.1 The Clerk presented the report which informed Members about the establishment of a National Public Services Leadership Board and provided an update on the Compact for Collaboration.

13.2 The Public Service Leadership Group, chaired by the Minister for Local Government and Communities, had been established to provide national leadership for public service reform and collaboration, and to drive the pace of improvement in public services of Wales. In terms of the Compact, the North Wales Leadership Board had broadly welcomed it and was already working positively and progressively towards seven of the ten collaborative actions outlined in the document.

13.3 **RESOLVED to note the**

- (i) establishment of the Public Services Leadership Board;**
- (ii) progress of the national Compact for collaboration.**

14 SAFER COMMUNITIES REGIONAL BOARD REVIEW UPDATE

14.1 The Clerk provided an update about the Safer Communities Regional Board which will be in place for the New Year. The Board will be responsible for the strategy, commissioning, priority setting, performance and accountability of safer communities work.

14.2 Cllr M Griffith asked about scrutiny arrangements for the Board as she felt it was important to have them in place before the Board started its work. The Clerk confirmed that progress reports would be provided to all six constituent authorities which already had a duty to scrutinise the work of community safety partnerships and therefore would be continuing on a similar format.

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

15 CHINESE LANTERNS

15.1 The Clerk presented the report which asked Members to consider the Notice of Motion recently passed at Flintshire County Council about Chinese Lanterns.

15.2 The Clerk explained that Flintshire County Council had recently discussed the issue of Chinese Lanterns as councillors had concerns about the devices and considered them dangerous to livestock and the countryside in general. The Clerk confirmed that he would be writing to other constituent authorities as well as the WLGA to bring the matter to their attention.

15.3 Members supported the Motion and it was agreed to amend the wording to '.... ban the SALE and use' and also to change the word 'projectiles' to 'devices'.

15.4 **RESOLVED to support the Motion passed by Flintshire County Council and call upon the Westminster Parliament and/or the Welsh Government to introduce legislation to ban the sale and use of such flying devices.**

16 INDEPENDENT REMUNERATION PANEL FOR WALES

16.1 The report was presented to ask Members to note the Independent Remuneration Panel's Draft Annual Report 2011 which determined the range and level of allowances for members of Local Authorities, National Park Authorities and Fire Authorities. The report provided to Members detailed the recommendations which affected the Authority and the response made by the Clerk.

16.2 Members felt that the Independent Remuneration Panel was extending its own remit excessively. Cllr P C Evans raised concerns about the special responsibility allowances and also the requirement to ask the organisation to book overnight accommodation; he felt that if Members were able to secure a more favourable rate themselves then they should be allowed to book it and ask the organisation to reimburse their claim.

16.3 Cllr E C George declared an interest as Chair of the Audit Committee. He felt that there were some anomalies in the Panel's recommendations, e.g. that the Standards Members would be paid the same as an Authority member. In relation to chairs of committees, Cllr George explained the Authority had not adopted the additional salary for the "chair of other committees" whereas South and Mid and West FRAs had previously adopted it and Cllr George felt it was something that should be reconsidered by the North Wales FRA.

16.4 **RESOLVED to note the**
(i) report and await the outcome of the consultation response;
(ii) Welsh Local Government Association response attached to the report.

17 MINUTES OF MEETINGS

17.1 The minutes of the following meetings were submitted for information:

- Audit Committee meeting held on 6th June
- Executive Panel meetings held on 18th July and 19th September
- Standards Committee meeting held on 8th June

17.2 **RESOLVED to note the minutes for information.**

PART II

18 BUSINESS CONTINUITY

18.1 The report was presented to ask Members to note and endorse the Service Administrative Policy & Procedure Orders Section 1 Order No. 3 Business Continuity Management Policy.

- 18.2 The Chief Fire Officer advised Members that a notice had been received from the unions stating they were in a trade dispute with the Authority over public sector pension reforms. To date, Unison was the only union that had confirmed its intention to ballot for a strike on 30th November 2011.
- 18.3 The Service has a well-developed Business Continuity management policy which was launched on the 1st October 2007 following endorsement by the Authority as part of the policy's overall governance procedures. In addition Members were asked to unanimously endorse the policy circulated in order to provide assurance to staff when the policy needs to be utilised.
- 18.4 ACFO Claydon explained that the confidential document circulated provided a whole range of options and built upon the statutory duties of the Authority to ensure those duties were delivered during any industrial action. ACFO Claydon gave Members a presentation about the various aspects included in the document.
- 18.5 The Chief Fire Officer reminded Members that the provision of military cover had been available in the past but no longer existed. The Authority's statutory duties still applied during industrial action but they were seen as 'target' duties not an absolute requirement, however, the Authority had a responsibility to ensure plans were in place to manage during industrial action.
- 18.6 **RESOLVED to:**
- (i) note the information provided; and**
 - (ii) endorse the contents of the Service Administrative Policy & Procedure Orders Section 1 Order No. 3 Business Continuity Management Policy as the Service's working document in the event of industrial action.**