

NORTH WALES FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY

Minutes of the meeting of North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority held on Monday 18th June 2012 at Anglesey Council Chamber, Llangefni. Meeting commenced at 11.30am.

PRESENT

Councillor

A Morris Jones (Chair)
M LI Davies (Deputy Chair)
A I Dunbar
B Dunn
A Evans
J G Evans
C L Guy-Davies
J B Hughes
W I Hughes
A Jones
E A Jones
L A W Jones
P R Lewis
D A MacRae
D J Miles
P Owen
W R Owen
R E Parry
P H Pemberton
W P Shotton
J R Skelland
A Tansley
W O Thomas

Representing

Anglesey County Council
Denbighshire County Council
Flintshire County Council
Flintshire County Council
Wrexham County Borough Council
Anglesey County Council
Denbighshire County Council
Gwynedd Council
Anglesey County Council
Wrexham County Borough Council
Denbighshire County Council
Gwynedd Council
Conwy County Borough Council
Conwy County Borough Council
Conwy County Borough Council
Denbighshire County Council
Gwynedd Council
Conwy County Borough Council
Wrexham County Borough Council
Flintshire County Council
Wrexham County Borough Council
Conwy County Borough Council
Flintshire County Council

Also present:

S A Smith (Chief Fire Officer and Chief Executive); C P Everett (Clerk and Monitoring Officer to the Authority); G Owens (Deputy Clerk and Monitoring Officer to the Authority); K W Finch (Treasurer to the Authority); D Docx (Deputy Chief Fire Officer); P Claydon and R Simmons (Assistant Chief Fire Officers); G Brandrick (Senior Operations Manager); R Fairhead (Senior Training and Development Manager); 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

H McGuill
W T Owen
M A Reece

Representing

Flintshire County Council
Gwynedd Council
Flintshire County Council

1 DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

1.1 None.

2 NOTICE OF URGENT MATTERS

2.1 There were no urgent matters.

3 MINUTES

3.1 The minutes of the Fire and Rescue Authority meeting held on 19th March 2012 were submitted for approval.

3.2 **RESOLVED to approve the minutes as a true and correct record of proceedings.**

4 MATTERS ARISING

4.1 10.7 - Discretionary Compensation for the Early Termination of Employment – ACFO Simmons explained that investigations had been undertaken into the legalities of discretionary compensation for the early termination of employment. Legal advice had now been received and is being considered and analysed carefully by officers to ensure that the Authority makes a legal decision and acts appropriately.

4.2.1 12.4 - Establishment of the Welsh Fire and Rescue Authorities' National Issues Committee (NIC) – the Chief Fire Officer explained the background to the establishment of the NIC which seeks to formalise collaboration as an option and that it is delivered throughout the three fire and rescue authorities in Wales. The NIC will commission pieces of work throughout Wales and once agreed will oversee its delivery. The development work has been done and the first meeting will take place on 17th July. Both the Chair and Deputy Chair will be on the committee together with the Chief Fire Officer and Deputy Chief Fire Officer.

4.2.2 Cllr A Jones asked if the representative bodies were represented on the committee. The Chief Fire Officer explained that they had been part of the consultation process in the lead up to the establishment of the committee but were not represented on the committee itself.

5 2011-12 PROVISIONAL UNAUDITED PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

5.1 The Corporate Planning Manager informed Members about the unaudited Strategic Performance Indicator results for the Authority for the 2011-12 year. The final figures will be provided to the Authority once they have been audited by the Wales Audit Office.

5.2 The Fire and Rescue Authorities (Performance Indicators) (Wales) Order 2011 specified three statutory Strategic Performance Indicators by which fire and rescue authorities' performance would be measured from 2011-12 onwards.

- 5.3 The Corporate Planning Manager explained that Provisional results against all the calculated Strategic Performance Indicators in 2011-12 show an improvement in comparison with the 2010-11 results.
- 5.4 The number of fires had decreased from 3,297 to 3,165 and the number of primary fires (i.e. most serious) had reduced from 1,346 to 1,299. The Chief Fire Officer commented that it was pleasing to note that the number of deaths caused by fires had reduced over the years, however, he emphasised that there was no room for complacency. Work to continue to drive down the number even further and partnership working with various agencies was crucial in order to ensure that the 'hard to reach' in society heard, and listened, to the fire safety messages.
- 5.5 Cllr P Shotton applauded the Authority and the Service for the work undertaken since 2001 in improving fire prevention aspects and the rollout of the home fire safety checks across North Wales which had proved to be an excellent addition to the safety of the people of North Wales.
- 5.6 Cllr J Evans asked whether the holiday season affected the numbers of fires. It was confirmed that previous analysis that had been undertaken had shown that tourists did not have an effect generally but may make a little difference to gorse fires/fires in the open.
- 5.7 **RESOLVED to note the Authority's provisional unaudited Strategic Performance Indicators results for 2011-12.**
- 6 TREASURY MANAGEMENT ACTIVITY AND ACTUAL PRUDENTIAL INDICATORS FOR 2011-2012
- 6.1 The Treasurer introduced the report which is an annual requirement of the Authority's reporting procedures. The report details the treasury activity and the actual Prudential Indicators for 2011-2012 in accordance with the requirements of the Prudential Code.
- 6.2 The Treasurer explained that the actual capital expenditure was significantly lower than the original indicator due to changes with the Wrexham fire station project and other slippage during the year.
- 6.3 The Authority had complied with all the relevant statutory and regulatory requirements which limit the levels of risk associated with its treasury management activities.
- 6.4 **RESOLVED to approve the actual 2011-2012 Prudential Indicators.**
- 7 FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE 2011-12
- 7.1 The Treasurer introduced the report which provided Members with a review of the financial performance of the Authority for 2011-12.
- 7.2 The Authority had a 3-year financial strategy in order to achieve its savings targets and was now in the second year of the plan. During 2011-12 (year 1) officers had implemented schemes to meet the future savings targets. Strict

budgetary control had meant that further savings had been made in year 1 to ensure the Authority was in a good position to meet the agreed savings targets in subsequent years. It was noted that the net underspend for 2011-12 is £527,000.

7.3 The Treasurer drew Members' attention to the Authority's reserves and provisions. A reserve is defined as a 'voluntary action by the Authority to set resources aside for future schemes'. A provision is defined as 'funds set aside when the Authority has a present obligation as a result of a past event (legal or constructive) and it is probable that a settlement will be made some time in the future'.

7.4 The Authority held £641,000 in reserves as at 1st April 2011 and due to effective budget management had not had to use reserves to fund expenditure in 2011-12. It was noted that the Authority had always been able to hold provisions and currently had two provisions as follows:

- pension provision to cover payments into the pension fund for ill-health retirements and to cover ill-health lump sum payments not covered by the pension scheme;
- provision to cover the cost of back pay for retained firefighters which will be made in the June 2012 payroll run. However, it was noted that the provision set aside may not be sufficient due to an on-going national dispute with HMRC.

7.5 The Treasurer made Members aware that possible future pressures could include increased costs in pay, fuel, employers pension contributions as well as cuts to the Revenue Support Grant and a decrease in grant funding. This was in addition to the savings targets outlined in the report. It was therefore considered prudent to set aside underspends in to Reserves and Provisions to ensure the Authority had some financial safeguard for the future.

7.6 The Treasurer informed Members that the Authority's statement of accounts had to be approved by the end of September. As the Authority's next meeting was to be held in October, the Treasurer asked Members to delegate authority to the Audit Committee to approve the statement of accounts.

7.7 **RESOLVED to**

- (i) approve the transfer of the underspend to the RDS back pay provision, ill-health pension provision, fleet management system reserve, redundancy reserve and HQ purchase reserve together with a contribution of £526,984 to general reserve; and**
- (ii) delegate authority to the Audit Committee to approve the statement of accounts 2011-12 at its September meeting.**

8 ANNUAL REPORT BAD DEBTS WRITTEN OFF

8.1 At the request of the Authority, the Treasurer submits an annual report by the 30th June following the end of the financial year listing all the debts written off and stating the reasons for write off.

8.2 **RESOLVED to note that, between 1st April 2011 and 31st March 2012, no bad debts had been written off.**

9 ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT

9.1 The Deputy Chief Fire Officer introduced the report which sought Members' approval of the Annual Governance Statement prepared for the year ending 2011-12.

9.2 Members were informed that the purpose of the Annual Governance Statement is to report publicly on the extent to which an Authority complies with its own code on an annual basis. A Code of Corporate Governance format appropriate for all three fire and rescue services in Wales had been produced. The statement included details on how effective governance arrangements in that year had been and on any planned improvements in the coming period.

9.3 In carrying out the self-assessment review for 2011-12 officers reported no areas of major concerns in the governance arrangements for North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority. The Service had addressed the four key issues raised in the 2010-11 appropriately and five key but minor issues have been highlighted to be addressed during 2012-13.

9.4 **RESOLVED to approve the Annual Governance Statement for 2011-12.**

10 INTERNAL AUDIT ANNUAL STATEMENT OF ASSURANCE 2011/12

10.1 The Treasurer presented the report and apologised that the Head of Internal Audit was unable to attend the meeting. The report is part of the Authority's annual requirement to conduct a review of the effectiveness of its system of internal control.

10.2 It was confirmed that the Internal Auditor was satisfied that the internal audit work undertaken, together with maintained knowledge of the organisation and its procedures, allowed a reasonable conclusion to be drawn as to the adequacy and effectiveness of the NWFRA risk management, control and governance processes. For the 12 months ended 31st March 2012, NWFRA had satisfactory internal control and corporate governance processes to manage the achievement of the Authority's objectives.

10.3 **RESOLVED that the Internal Audit Annual Statement of Assurance be accepted and utilised to contribute to the evidence content of the 2011/12 Annual Governance Statement.**

11 SENIOR PAY REVIEW

11.1 The report was presented to inform Members of the requirement for an independent review of senior pay within the fire and rescue service for the five designated senior posts.

- 11.2 The Clerk explained that Members were being asked to agree to a review of senior pay being undertaken and that the results of the review would be presented to Members at a future Authority meeting.
- 11.3 Cllr J R Skelland felt that there should be a fourth purpose to the review to reflect the current economic climate. The Clerk explained that it would be taken into account but that the main focus of the review would be to compare salaries with other similar public bodies and the national benchmark. Members would then have the opportunity to decide what was fair and right to pay.
- 11.4 **RESOLVED to commission a senior pay review and note that the results will be presented to Members at a future meeting.**
- 12 EXTENSION OF SERVICE LEVEL AGREEMENT FOR THE ROLE OF A CLERK
- 12.1 The Clerk and Deputy Clerk left the meeting whilst discussion of this item took place.
- 12.2 The report sought retrospective approval to extend the current service level agreement for the provision of clerk, monitoring officer, constitutional advice and other services to the North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority.
- 12.3 The Deputy Chief Fire Officer explained that the Authority's service level agreement with Flintshire County Council for the services of its Chief Executive and Head of Legal and Democratic Services as clerk and monitoring officer had expired on 31st March 2012. Due to the start of a new Fire and Rescue Authority it was considered advisable to renew the agreement with Flintshire County Council for a period of one year up until 31st March 2013. During the year a review of the role will be undertaken prior to arrangements being made for 2013 onwards.
- 12.4 **RESOLVED to retrospectively approve extending the current agreement for the role of Clerk for a further period of one year.**
- 13 COMPLAINTS AND LETTERS OF APPRECIATION
- 13.1 Members are informed about the number of complaints and expressions of appreciation received on an annual basis. The current report submitted to the Authority covered the period 1st April 2011 – 31st March 2012.
- 13.2 Assistant Chief Fire Officer Simmons informed Members that 22 complaints had been received compared to 40 in the previous year. ACFO Simmons explained that five driving-related complaints had been received during the year, which in context of the 14,225 emergency vehicle journeys the Service had attended, was a very low number. It was confirmed that every complaint is investigated with those individuals found to be responsible being given more training and reminded of the standard of driving required within the Service.

13.3 It was noted that 97 letters, cards, e-mails and Facebook messages were received during the year expressing appreciation and satisfaction with the Service. The letters of appreciation received covered a wide range of Fire and Rescue Service activities including visits to schools, hosting station visits, operational incidents and partnership working.

13.4 **RESOLVED to note the number of complaints and expressions of appreciation received.**

14 MEMBERS' REMUNERATION SCHEME

14.1 The report was presented to ask Members to approve the revised North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority's Members' Remuneration Scheme following the publication of the Independent Remuneration Panel's annual report published in December 2011.

14.2 The Treasurer explained that the establishment of a national independent remuneration panel meant that Members no longer had to decide on their own remuneration and allowances.

14.3 Further amendments were required to the draft scheme and the Treasurer and Clerk would work together to amend the scheme which had to be submitted to the Independent Remuneration Panel for final approval. It was noted that the daily fee payable to independent Members of the Standards Committee was £198 and £256 payable to the chair of the Standards Committee. The Treasurer would also clarify the fee payable to chair of the Authority's Audit Committee.

14.4 Cllr J R Skelland asked whether not accepting the increases was an option as he was concerned that the current economic climate had not been taken into consideration when deciding the figures. The Treasurer explained that the Authority collectively could not refuse to accept the changes but individuals could put it in writing to the Treasurer and Clerk if they wanted to be paid less than what was proposed.

14.5 **RESOLVED to note the draft scheme and that the final version will be submitted to the Independent Remuneration Panel for final approval.**

15 SAFER COMMUNITIES REGIONAL BOARD AND POLICE AND CRIME COMMISSIONER

15.1 The Clerk gave an update regarding the establishment of a Regional Safer Communities Board and the appointment of the Police and Crime Commissioner and Panels.

15.2 The Regional Safer Communities Board has been established and a partnership agreement has been approved by constituent authorities. Its first meeting will be held in June. The Police and Crime Commissioners will be elected on 15th November 2012 and will be responsible for working with a range of community safety and criminal justice partners in local areas to develop and deliver policing plans and priorities.

- 15.3 North Wales Fire and Rescue Service is a member of the Regional Safer Communities Board which will advise the Police Commissioner on the community safety priorities in the region.
- 15.4 **RESOLVED to note the information provided.**
- 16 INFORMATIVE
- 16.1 The Authority's magazine was distributed at the meeting. The Informative is published four times a year and gives Members an insight into the work undertaken by the Service.
- 16.2 **RESOLVED to accept the latest edition of the Informative magazine.**