

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

Minutes of the Executive Panel Meeting of the North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority held on 17<sup>th</sup> September 2012 at Fire and Rescue Headquarters, St Asaph. Meeting commenced at 2pm.

PRESENT

Cllr A M Jones (Chair)	Anglesey County Council
Cllr M Ll Davies	Denbighshire County Council
Cllr B Dunn	Flintshire County Council
Cllr A Evans	Wrexham County Borough Council
Cllr W I Hughes	Anglesey County Council
Cllr P R Lewis	Conwy County Borough Council
Cllr H McGuill	Flintshire County Council
Cllr P W Owen	Denbighshire County Council
Cllr W R Owen	Gwynedd Council
Cllr W T Owen	Gwynedd Council
Cllr P Pemberton	Wrexham County Borough Council

ALSO PRESENT:

S A Smith (Chief Fire Officer and Chief Executive); G Owens (Deputy Monitoring Officer); K Finch (Treasurer); D Docx (Deputy Chief Fire Officer); P Claydon (Assistant Chief Fire Officer); R Fairhead (Senior Training and Development Manager); G W Griffiths (Senior Fire Safety Manager); S Morris (Corporate Planning Manager); T Williams (Corporate Communications Manager); A Davies (Member Liaison Officer).

Apologies:

Cllr E A Jones	Denbighshire County Council
Cllr A Tansley	Conwy County Borough Council
R Simmons	Assistant Chief Fire Officer

Before the meeting started, the Chief Fire Officer informed Members about the passing of Firefighter Chris Burns following a long and difficult illness. As well as being a firefighter at Colwyn Bay fire station, Chris was the FBU secretary for North Wales and had been a regular observer at Authority meetings over the years. The Chair and Deputy Chair as well as the two previous Chairs of the Authority had attended the funeral along with a number of officers and colleagues. The Chief Fire Officer informed Members that the Service will provide support to Chris' family and colleagues. A minute's silence was held at the meeting as a mark of respect.

1 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

1.1 None.

2 MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 16<sup>TH</sup> JULY 2012

2.1 The minutes of the meeting held on 16<sup>th</sup> July were approved as a correct record.

3 MATTERS ARISING

3.1 There were no matters arising.

4 BUDGET OPTIONS 2013-14

4.1 The Deputy Chief Fire Officer presented the report which asked Members to agree the Executive Panel's recommendations to the Fire and Rescue Authority as to the assumptions to be used in the budget setting process for the financial year 2013-14. A detailed draft budget will be presented to the Fire and Rescue Authority in December 2012 for approval.

4.2 In line with the Authority's medium term financial strategy, set in December 2010, to reduce its budget by £800,000 per year over 3 years, it is anticipated that this will be achieved in 2013-14 (year 3) by reducing the budget for community safety by another £50,000, reducing support staff posts by £180,000, and another £500,000 to be achieved through the rostering arrangements, as firefighters leave and are not replaced. A balancing figure of £70,000 will be taken from remaining budget lines.

4.3 Members were advised that there could be additional potential budget pressures and risks which could affect the budget. The DCFO informed Members that a pay award of 1% for firefighters had been agreed which would be backdated to July 2012, however, it was noted that this had been anticipated and factored into the budget. There were greater concerns that funding from the Welsh Government in the form of direct grant may either be reduced or removed in the next financial year.

4.4 **RESOLVED to:**

- (i) note the financial strategy set in the medium term financial plan;**
- (ii) recommend to the Fire and Rescue Authority that the previously agreed means of achieving those savings be pursued;**
- (iii) note the risks around setting a balanced budget for 2013-14;**
- (iv) receive further information, if those potential risks materialise.**

5 IMPROVEMENT PLAN

5.1 The Corporate Planning Manager presented the report which asked Members to finalise the Executive Panel's recommendations to the Fire and Rescue Authority in view of the Improvement Plan Working Group's proposals for the Authority's future improvement objectives.

5.2 The Local Government (Wales) Measure 2009 requires Welsh improvement authorities to make arrangements to secure continuous improvement and to set improvement objectives every year, having first consulted on those objectives with representatives of interested parties.

5.3 The Improvement Plan Working Group had met several times over the summer to consider information and discuss the development of the Authority's 2013-14 improvement objectives; it had also considered how work could progress to support the development of future improvement objectives. A meeting of the Improvement Plan Working Group had been held in the morning prior to the Executive Panel meeting. Members had received a copy of the draft consultation document and were broadly content with it, noting that further information will be inserted prior to its submission to the Fire and Rescue Authority for final approval before publication.

5.4 **RESOLVED to:**

- i) **note that the Improvement Plan Working Group was broadly content with the draft Improvement Plan consultation document which contained recommendations for the Authority's Improvement Objectives;**
- ii) **confirm that the Executive Panel recommended the following to the full Fire and Rescue Authority at its meeting on 15<sup>th</sup> October 2012:**
  - a) **the Authority's 2013-14 Improvement Objectives; and**
  - b) **that any preparatory work as necessary should be undertaken to support the development of the Authority's Improvement Objectives in future years.**

## 6 PERFORMANCE MONITORING

6.1 The performance monitoring report provided Members with information relating to North Wales Fire and Rescue Service activity and to monitor performance against improvement objectives. In addition to the report based on the first quarter of the 2012-13 reporting year, Members had also been provided with the performance monitoring data relating to the full 2011-12 reporting year for information.

6.2 The Deputy Chief Fire Officer led Members through the performance information for the first quarter of the 2012-13 reporting year and highlighted the following (when compared to the same period last year):

- a reduction of 13% in accidental fires in dwellings
- a 17% increase in the number of people who escaped unharmed and unaided from accidental fires in dwellings –a year on year increase can be seen in this category due to people knowing what to do should a fire break out. It is considered that this can be partly attributed to the work of the Service in providing home fire safety checks (HFSCs) including advice on how to escape safely when a fire occurs
- presence of smoke alarms in dwellings where a fire occurs –a gradual increase can be seen in this indicator due to more properties having a smoke detector which are installed free of charge by the Service
- an increase in the category of a 'smoke alarm present but has not activated in the event of a fire' is no longer a cause for concern.

Following research it has been identified that this is mainly due to the fire starting in another part of the house which was too far from the smoke detector for it to activate. The Service is, however, focusing on the indicator where no alarm at all was present at a dwelling.

- it is pleasing to note that 40% of HFSCs completed were as a result of a referral from a partner agency, this exceeds the target of 25% set and shows that working in partnership with various agencies across North Wales has a positive effect and helps the Service to target the most vulnerable people in society
- there has been a 19% decrease in the total number of fires attended, and although there is an overall reduction in deliberate fires, they still form nearly 50% of all fires attended. The Service focuses a lot of attention on reducing deliberate fires
- again, there was a decrease of 26% in fires in non-domestic premises and the Service is actively working to prevent these fires.

6.3 Cllr P R Lewis asked whether chimney fires were due to the fuel used or a lack of maintenance because of the recession. It was agreed to research this issue and respond to Cllr Lewis via email at a later date.

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

7 STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS 2011-12

7.1 The audited Statement of Accounts for 2011-12 and the Annual Governance Statement were presented to Members prior to them being presented to the Audit Committee for approval on 24 September 2012. By presenting the accounts to both committees it ensures that all Authority Members have had the opportunity to examine and comment on the latest set of the accounts.

7.2 The Treasurer confirmed that the statement presented an accurate reflection of what the Authority had spent and an accurate position as at the end of March 2012. It was noted that the auditors will be in attendance at the Audit Committee. However, the Treasurer confirmed that he was not aware of any major issues with the accounts.

7.3 **RESOLVED to note the Statement of Accounts for 2010-11 and there were no comments to be referred to the Audit Committee.**

8 WELSH LANGUAGE MONITORING REPORT

8.1 The Deputy Chief Fire Officer presented the report which asked Members to approve the North Wales Fire and Rescue Service Welsh Language Scheme Monitoring Report for 2011-12 prior to formal submission to the Welsh Language Commissioner.

8.2 The monitoring report details how the Authority and Service have been developing and using the Welsh language both for service delivery and within

the Service itself. There is a theme of collaboration throughout the document, and the Service is working with the police, local authorities and other fire authorities in order not to duplicate work and to ensure maximum benefit for all involved. The report contained detailed statistics about the work being done to improve employees' Welsh language skills.

8.3 **RESOLVED to**

- (i) **note the progress made in relation to the Welsh Language Scheme; and**
- (ii) **approve the 2011-12 Monitoring Report prior to formal submission to the Welsh Language Commissioner.**

9 NATIONAL ISSUES COMMITTEE

9.1 The Chief Fire Officer presented the report which updated Members about the latest developments with regards to the National Issues Committee (NIC). He reassured Members that North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority would remain independent and that the NIC had been established on a voluntary, informal basis and not by way of a variation to the Combination Order, nor by way of the Local Government Act.

9.2 It was noted that the NIC's terms of reference were approved by the three FRAs in March 2012 and its aims are to develop and implement improved arrangements for the strategic and co-ordinated delivery of collaborative work.

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

10 DWELLING FIRES RESPONSE CHARTER

10.1 The report was presented to recommend that the Authority formally adopts the Dwelling Fires Response Charter. The Response Charter has been created to meet the Welsh Government's request for each FRA to develop response standards for attending dwelling fires in its own area and to provide a clear picture of what the people of Wales can expect to receive where they live.

10.2 The Welsh Government has issued guiding principles stating that the local dwelling fire response standard should aim to reduce dwelling fires in the FRA's area and the number of casualties from dwelling fires. The local standard must also maintain or improve firefighter safety and recognise the importance of operational competence for personnel undertaking operational roles. Due to the urban/rural differences across Wales an all-Wales standard was not considered suitable therefore the three FRAs have taken a coordinated approach and drawn up a charter with seven broad outcome-focussed public commitments which are:

- Take the lead in driving down the number of dwelling fires that occur, and reduce their impact on people.
- React quickly and efficiently every time we receive an emergency 999 call to attend a dwelling fire.
- Attend dwelling fires swiftly and properly equipped to deal with them.

- Deal with dwelling fires effectively, efficiently and professionally.
- Help to restore normality to communities in the aftermath of dwelling fires.
- Investigate the causes of dwelling fires and hold relevant people to account when appropriate to do so.
- Strive to maintain high standards and improve aspects of what we do.

10.3 **RESOLVED to approve the adoption by the Authority of the Dwelling Fires Response Charter.**

PART II

11 CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2012/13

11.1 ACFO Claydon presented the report which provided Members with an update on the North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority's capital programme.

11.2 Wrexham fire and ambulance station project – the planning application to Wrexham County Borough Council had been suspended whilst WAST addressed some issues raised by the council. It was noted that the sign off of the final business case would be subject to detailed planning consent.

11.3 DDA and equality compliance works - the project to ensure fire stations and premises were compliant with the disability and equality legislation, as far as reasonably practicable, was nearing completion. It is expected that work at Betws y Coed fire station will be completed in November which will then conclude the project subject to the releasing of contractors retention after expiry of the 12 month defects liability period.

11.4 Nefyn fire station – site investigation works and the detailed design are currently in progress and a planning application will be submitted upon completion of the design.

11.5 Tywyn fire station – this project has been deferred until a later date. It was noted that both Nefyn and Tywyn fire stations will be of the same design with space created for local community policing.

11.6 NWFRS headquarters, St Asaph – the Executive Panel approved the purchase of the HQ building in the meeting held on 6<sup>th</sup> February 2012. Legal searches were currently being undertaken in relation to the property.

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