

NORTH WALES FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY EXECUTIVE PANEL

Minutes of the Executive Panel Meeting of the North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority held on 13th May 2013 at Fire and Rescue Headquarters, St Asaph. Meeting commenced at 2pm.

PRESENT

Cllr A M Jones (Chair)	Anglesey County Council
Cllr M LI Davies	Denbighshire County Council
Cllr R Davies	Denbighshire County Council
Cllr B Dunn	Flintshire County Council
Cllr H McGuill	Flintshire County Council
Cllr P R Lewis	Conwy County Borough 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); C Everett (Clerk and Monitoring Officer); K Finch (Treasurer); D Docx (Deputy Chief Fire Officer); P Claydon, R Simmons and R Fairhead (Assistant Chief Fire Officers); G Brandrick (Senior Fire Safety Manager); G W Griffiths (Senior Development Manager); L Roberts (Senior Control and Business Continuity Manager); S Morris (Corporate Planning Manager); T Williams (Corporate Communications Manager); A Davies (Member Liaison Officer).

OBSERVER: Cllr J R Skelland (Wrexham County Borough Council).

Apologies:

Cllr A Evans	Wrexham County Borough Council
Cllr P W Owen	Denbighshire County Council
Cllr A Tansley	Conwy County Borough Council

1 DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

- 1.1 Cllr P Pemberton declared an interest on the Wrexham Fire and Ambulance Project report in part II, as he is a member of Wrexham County Borough Council's Planning Committee. The Clerk advised that Cllr Pemberton would need to declare a personal interest only and this was duly noted.

2 MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 4TH FEBRUARY 2013

- 2.1 The minutes of the last meeting were submitted for approval. ACFO Simmons advised Members that there was a slight inaccuracy in paragraph 4.3 and that the minutes would be amended prior to being signed by the Chair and posted on the website.
- 2.2 **RESOLVED to approve the minutes and noted that paragraph 4.3 would be amended prior to being published.**

3 MATTERS ARISING

- 3.1 There were no matters arising.

4 IMPROVEMENT PLAN WORKING GROUP: VERBAL UPDATE

- 4.1 A meeting of the working group had been held on the morning of 13th May. The Chief Fire Officer read out a statement summarising the meeting:

"A meeting of the Improvement Planning Working Group was held this morning and the sole item on the agenda was the Service's Financial Strategy for the financial years 2014/15 to 2016/17 inclusive.

Members agreed a set of planning assumptions and were advised in some detail of the potential risks and likely impacts on any decisions made around those assumptions.

In particular Members felt strongly that all aspects of work that are currently grant funded could not be maintained if that funding was to be withdrawn.

After an extensive discussion, Members of the working group unanimously agreed to recommend to the FRA, via the Executive Panel, that officers should develop proposals designed to preserve wherever possible existing levels of Service provision and that a decision to freeze or reduce the budget for the next planning cycle would be unacceptable."

- 4.2 The Treasurer advised caution and informed Members of ongoing discussions with Welsh Government and the WLGA. It is anticipated that local authorities' budgets will be pressurised even further over the next few years therefore the Authority will need to carefully consider whether it can request an increased contribution from local authorities.

- 4.3 **RESOLVED to note the update from the Improvement Plan Working Group and the Treasurer's comments.**

5 AERIAL LADDER PLATFORMS (ALPs)

- 5.1 ACFO Fairhead presented the report which updated Members on the provision of ALPs, when required in the Llandudno area, since the number of ALPs in the Service was reduced from four to three.

- 5.2 Of the 27 occasions when the ALP was mobilised to the Llandudno area it had been used on three occasions. Twice the ALP had attended under blue light conditions and reached its destination within the Authority's standard attendance time of 30 minutes. Members were informed that the ALP currently based at Rhyl fire station was approaching the end of its serviceable life and a procurement process is underway to purchase a replacement.

5.3 Cllr P R Lewis welcomed the report and confirmed that he will be reporting back to his constituent authority in order to allay initial fears when the ALP was removed from Llandudno.

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

6 FIREFIGHTER RECRUITMENT – RETAINED DUTY SYSTEM (RDS)

6.1 ACFO Simmons presented the report which detailed the recent recruitment and selection activity to encourage people to apply to be a RDS firefighter at their local fire station.

6.2 The recent recruitment campaign was considered a success with a variety of activities undertaken to attract applicants including local leaflet drops, displayed posters, press releases, open evenings being held at those stations requiring RDS firefighters and bilingual advertisements on the radio and online. The total cost of advertising was approximately £1520 which is substantially less than the cost of traditional advertising such as placing advertisements in newspapers.

6.3 Nearly 200 application packs were distributed with 107 completed applications submitted for consideration. Of the 76 applicants who were invited to undertake the various selection tests, 25 individuals have now commenced their phase one development programme. It was noted that eleven communities had been targeted for new recruits, and Porthmadog was the only station not to have had any successful applicants.

6.4 In response to a Member's question about whether there were now enough RDS firefighters in post to satisfy long term demand, the Chief Fire Officer replied that although the new process of advertising had provided 25 new recruits, work was still in progress to look at more innovative methods of crewing stations.

6.5 **RESOLVED to note the information and the high rate of success in recruiting RDS firefighters.**

7 SOCIAL MEDIA PROTOCOL

7.1 The Clerk presented the report which invited Members to consider the draft protocol on the use of social media in meetings prior to its submission to the Authority at its meeting in June.

7.2 The protocol applies to both members and officers of the Authority and members of the press and public wishing to use social media at any Authority meetings. The protocol forms an addendum to the Authority Members' Code of Conduct and failure to adhere to the protocol could be taken into account when considering whether a breach of the Code of Conduct has taken place. The CFO confirmed that an officer will attend meetings to monitor and respond to comments on Twitter to ensure they are appropriate and an accurate reflection of the meeting.

7.3 **RESOLVED to recommend that the social media protocol be submitted to the June meeting of the Authority for adoption.**

8 CONSULTATION ON THE REVISED CODE OF RECOMMENDED PRACTICE ON LOCAL AUTHORITY PUBLICITY IN WALES

- 8.1 The Deputy Chief Fire Officer presented the report which invited Members to approve the Authority's response to the consultation paper on the Code of Recommended Practice on Local Authority Publicity in Wales.
- 8.2 The Code has been updated to reflect changes that have occurred since it was published in 2001 and these changes principally involve updating the code to refer to relevant statutory provisions and adding guidance in relation to filming and broadcasting council meetings. The Authority's response indicates its support to the revised Code and welcomes its consistency with other published guidance from the Welsh Government. However, the response does mention the cost implications of filming and broadcasting meetings, but also the cost benefit of using social media to promote fire safety messages and in recruitment campaigns.

8.3 **RESOLVED to approve the Authority's response to the consultation.**

9 PRISON IN NORTH WALES

- 9.1 The Chief Fire Officer introduced the report which asked Members to endorse the Authority's support to the Regional Leadership Board's commitment for a prison to be located in North Wales.
- 9.2 As the Authority is a part of the Regional Leadership Board it is considered appropriate that the Authority demonstrates its support of the Board's commitment to having a prison in the region. Having a prison located in the region would bring significant economic benefits including stable employment and in terms of community safety it is anticipated that it would improve rehabilitation and reduction of reoffending rates in the area.
- 9.3 **RESOLVED to endorse the Authority's support to the Regional Leadership Board's commitment to have a prison located in North Wales.**

PART II

10 CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2013/14

- 10.1 ACFO Claydon presented the report that updated Members on the Authority's capital programme for 2013/14.
- 10.2 The DDA and equality compliance works at fire stations had been completed as far as reasonably practicable. It was noted that work is on-going at the Headquarters building to improve compliance with the disability legislation.
- 10.3 A sum has been set aside for planned maintenance and minor works and all works will be completed by 31st March 2014.

- 10.4 Nefyn fire station – planning consent has been obtained and it is anticipated that construction work will commence later in the year.
- 10.5 Tywyn fire station – a deposit has been paid to secure a plot of land for a new fire and rescue station.
- 10.6 Deeside fire station – the purchase of the adjoining ambulance station has been completed. A project board has been established to discuss the design and facilities and the first meeting will be held shortly.
- 10.7 **RESOLVED to note the update.**

11 WREXHAM FIRE AND AMBULANCE PROJECT

- 11.1 ACFO Claydon updated Members about the latest information relating to the proposed joint fire and ambulance station development in Wrexham.
- 11.2 At the Authority meeting in March, Members were informed that a letter had been sent to the Auditor General in Wales on 8th February requesting a value for money audit on the project and it had been agreed to await the findings of this report prior to making any final decisions. However, ACFO Claydon informed Members that a letter dated 12th April had been received from the Wales Audit Office stating that it was not in a position to undertake the audit. Officers have now appointed an external independent auditor to undertake the work and it is anticipated that an interim audit will be completed in time for the June Authority meeting. The Chair commented that it was disappointing to note the length of time the Wales Audit Office had taken to respond to the letter of 8th February and asked for this to be recorded.
- 11.3 At the Authority meeting in March, Members had requested that the Chief Fire Officer write to the Minister to request a meeting to discuss the project and the letter was duly sent on 20th March. A reply had been received on 30th April and a meeting had now been arranged for 24th May. Cllr Pemberton asked that his disappointment be recorded that the Minister had taken so long to respond to the request.
- 11.4 Members continued to be concerned at the length of time the project had taken and expressed concern that those based at Wrexham station continued to have to work in a not fit for purpose building.
- 11.5 **RESOLVED to note the information and that an interim value for money audit report will be submitted to the June Authority meeting.**