

**NORTH WALES FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY**

Minutes of the meeting of North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority held on Monday 19<sup>th</sup> March 2007 at County Hall, Ruthin. Meeting commenced at 10.30am.

**Present:**

Councillor

Representing

T Roberts (Chairman)	Gwynedd Council
E C George (Vice-Chairman)	Wrexham County Borough Council
P C Evans JP	Conwy County Borough Council
W E Jones	Conwy County Borough Council
R D Peacock	Conwy County Borough Council
G C Evans	Denbighshire County Council
S Frobisher	Denbighshire County Council
J A Smith	Denbighshire County Council
G Williams	Denbighshire County Council
D Barratt	Flintshire County Council
D Clayton	Flintshire County Council
E F Evans	Flintshire County Council
R G Hampson	Flintshire County Council
C Shone	Flintshire County Council
M Griffith	Gwynedd Council
E Morgan Jones	Gwynedd Council
W T Owen	Gwynedd Council
G O Williams	Gwynedd Council
N S Colbourne	Wrexham County Borough Council
G M Craddock	Wrexham County Borough Council
P M Shone	Wrexham County Borough Council
M Williams	Wrexham County Borough Council
W J Chorlton	Ynys Môn County Council
J A Roberts	Ynys Môn County Council
W T Roberts	Ynys Môn County Council

**Also present:**

S A Smith (Chief Fire Officer and Chief Executive); I R Miller (Clerk and Monitoring Officer to the Authority); K W Finch (Treasurer to the Authority); C Enness (Deputy Chief Fire Officer); P S Claydon (Assistant Chief Fire Officer, Service Delivery); D Docx (Assistant Chief Officer, Finance and Procurement); S Morris (Corporate Planning Manager); W A Murphy (Senior Operations Manager); G Brandrick (Service Development Manager); D G Roberts (Retained Duty System Project

Manager); M A Jones (Community Fire Safety Manager); S Forrest (Accountant, Treasurer's Department, Conwy County Borough Council) and Rh Evans (Member Liaison Officer).

## **PART I**

### **1) Apologies**

#### Councillor

#### Representing

S C Jones  
J Ovens

Conwy County Borough Council  
Flintshire County Council

### **2) Notice of Urgent Matters**

The Chairman advised that no items had been submitted to either the Clerk or him for consideration.

### **3) Announcements**

The Chairman:

- i. Congratulated the Chief Fire Officer on being awarded the Queen's Fire Service Medal (QFSM) in Her Majesty's New Year's Honours List. The medal was awarded in recognition of his duty and contribution to the Fire and Rescue Service.
- ii. Councillor C Shone was welcomed back following his stay in hospital and was wished a full and speedy recovery.
- iii. Members were informed that Inspector Derek Cheetham of the British Transport Police had indicated his wish to convey the Transport Police's gratitude to Service personnel from both Wrexham and Johnstown fire stations for their assistance at the scene of the recent railway tragedy at Johnstown, when a young girl had lost her life. The Transport Police wished to record their admiration for the manner in which Service personnel dealt with the incident. The Chairman advised that he would be writing to personnel at both stations to thank them for their efforts.
- iv. Members were informed of a project arranged by Gwynedd Council, and with which the Fire and Rescue Service was involved, called 'Pre Pass Plus'. The project was aimed at young drivers and developed road safety and safe driving skills. It was hoped that other areas would take up this initiative in due course.
- v. Members were requested to inform the Member Liaison Officer if they required an additional supply of the "Putting People First" business cards containing the freephone number for home fire safety checks (HFSCs). They were also advised that although the original business cards issued to them quoted a different freephone number to the one shown on the second batch, which displayed the recently launched all-Wales freephone

- number, callers that dialled the original number would automatically be diverted to the new number. The Vice-Chairman congratulated the Service on issuing all councillors in North Wales with a supply of the cards.
- vi. Members were informed that the visit they had requested to the Fire Service College at Moreton-in-Marsh had been provisionally arranged for Thursday 7<sup>th</sup> June 2007. A brief overview of the itinerary for the visit was read out and members were requested to inform the Member Liaison Officer if they would be participating in the visit.
  - vii. Congratulations were extended to all personnel involved with the arrangements for the Community Awards Ball held on 2<sup>nd</sup> March. The event had been a huge success. The Deputy Chief Fire Officer thanked members who, although unable to attend, had made donations towards the event. The amount raised for the three nominated charities currently totalled approximately £1715.
  - viii. Dates of future committee meetings: members were advised that the Risk Reduction Plan (RRP) Working Group would hold its next meeting on Monday 21<sup>st</sup> May 2007 at 10.30am. The Executive Panel would be meeting at 2pm on the same day. Both meetings would be held at Fire and Rescue Service Headquarters, St. Asaph. The Fire and Rescue Authority's next meeting was scheduled for 10.30am on Monday 18<sup>th</sup> June 2007 at Ynys Môn County Council Headquarters, Llangefni.

During the announcement of dates of future meetings Councillor W J Chorlton requested that consideration be given to avoiding scheduling all RRP Working Group and Executive Panel meetings on Mondays as, due to other commitments, he had difficulties in attending meetings on Mondays.

#### **4) Minutes**

The following minutes were submitted:

- i. Fire and Rescue Authority meeting held on 18<sup>th</sup> December 2007

**Resolved: - to approve the minutes as a true and correct record of proceedings.**

The following minutes were submitted for information purposes:

- ii. Executive Panel Meeting held on 12<sup>th</sup> December 2006
- iii. Senior Salary Review Committee held on 13<sup>th</sup> December 2006
- iv. Executive Panel meeting held on 24<sup>th</sup> January 2007

#### **5) Matters Arising**

The following matters arose from the minutes submitted:

**Fire and Rescue Authority, 18<sup>th</sup> December 2006, page 4, Item 5 - Matters Arising "Co-responding":** members were informed by the Chief Fire Officer that the

Appeal Court had published its judgement in relation to the appeal lodged by Nottinghamshire and Lincolnshire Fire and Rescue Authorities against the High Court's judgement on the issue of Co-responding and firefighters' contractual arrangements under the 2003 Pay and Conditions of Service Agreement. Originally the High Court had found in favour of the Fire Brigades Union (FBU); the Court of Appeal upheld the High Court's decision. Members were advised that the outcome of this case did not affect the situation in North Wales, as the Authority was seeking voluntary agreements with personnel for the provision of co-responding services. The Chief Fire Officer advised that he had already had preliminary discussions with the FBU and that he was confident of a positive outcome.

**Executive Panel, 24<sup>th</sup> January 2007, page 12, Item 19 – Location of Secondary**

**Control:** in response to clarification sought by Councillor W J Chorlton the Clerk confirmed that the Executive Panel, under powers delegated to it, had resolved to relocate the Service's Control Room to Crud-y-Dderwen, St. Asaph. Subsequently, its secondary control room would be relocated from Caernarfon to the site of the current control room at Rhyl. The Chief Fire Officer confirmed that he would continue to pursue the tri-service option as the optimum arrangement but, in the interim, both Police and Fire and Rescue Service control rooms would be co-located at Crud-y-Dderwen. Members were reminded by the Chief Fire Office and Clerk that the cost implications of the relocation process and issues surrounding the need to relocate both control rooms had been extensively detailed in the report and associated internal reports/consultants reports sent to Executive Panel members prior to the meeting. Copies of these documents had since been sent to all Authority members following the Executive Panel's meeting along with a letter informing them of the Panel's decision.

**6) Chairman's Report**

The Chairman introduced his report (distributed at the meeting) which provided members with a brief update on the meetings and events attended by him, in his capacity as Chairman and in his absence by the Vice-Chairman, since the Fire and Rescue Authority's last meeting on 18<sup>th</sup> December 2006. It was:

**Resolved: - to note the information contained in the report.**

**7) Provisional Outturn 2006/07**

The Treasurer introduced his report (previously circulated) which presented members with the estimated provisional outturn figure for the financial year 2006/07. Members were advised that, contrary to previous years which had yielded fairly substantial underspends, it was anticipated that the Authority would overspend its budget by approximately £143k by the end of the current financial year. The Treasurer detailed the contents of his report and highlighted the areas of the Service's business which had contributed to the overall

projected overspend, before proceeding to inform members that he would not be recommending the Authority to approach the constituent authorities for supplementary contributions to offset the overspend. Provisions currently held by the Authority, originally earmarked for various charges and costs which had since not materialised or been as high as originally anticipated, had been identified as being available to offset the overspend. In reply to members' questions the Treasurer advised that the figures shown for the setting-up costs and the Service Level Agreement for the joint Police and Fire and Rescue Service's Facilities Management Department was the Authority's share of the costs. The Chief Fire Officer confirmed that the costs of the necessary health and safety work, identified in late 2006 by the Facilities Management Department, had to be met solely by the Authority as they related to the Authority's properties. In reply to a question on the areas of work covered by relief staff, officers advised that relief staff were hired to cover long term sickness absences amongst support staff. It was:

**Resolved: - to note the current projected overspend and that the overspend be covered by the funds available in the provisions as set out in paragraph 10 of the report.**

## **8) Treasury Management**

In accordance with the Treasury Management's Code of Practice the Treasurer introduced his report (previously circulated) which advised the Authority of treasury management activity in relation to long-term borrowing, investments and of any changes to the Authority's list of counterparties. Members:

**Resolved: - to note the report.**

## **9) Arrangements for dealing with audit matters**

The Treasurer introduced his and the Clerk's joint report (previously circulated) requesting the Authority to extend the Executive Panel's powers to encompass dealing with certain audit matters. He referred members to item number 6 on the minutes of the Executive Panel's meeting of 24<sup>th</sup> January 2007 and explained that the report presented to them emanated from the recommendations of the Wales Audit Office's (WAO) Internal Audit Assessment report. The WAO was of the view that, as a matter of good corporate governance, the Authority should establish a properly constituted audit committee. Members were advised by the Treasurer that in his opinion, taking into consideration the size of the organisation and its total budget, the establishment of a stand-alone audit committee was unnecessary and would equate to an inefficient use of resources. The Executive Panel had concurred with this view and was therefore recommending to the Authority that it should extend the Panel's terms of reference to include dealing with audit matters such as approving the internal audit strategy, the annual programme of internal and external audit and the annual audit report. The approval of the annual Statement of Accounts, the Statement of Internal Control

and receiving the Annual Audit Letter would remain within the Fire and Rescue Authority's remit. Members were advised by the Clerk that if the Authority resolved to adopt the Executive Panel's recommendation the Panel's Terms of Reference would require amending. With this in mind a form of wording that could be incorporated into the Panel's Terms of Reference had been included in the report's recommendations for members' consideration. Replying to members' questions the Treasurer advised that it would be in order for the Authority to delegate its powers in relation to the audit matters listed to the Executive Panel: the Panel already had powers delegated to it in relation to dealing with regulatory plans and formulating responses to consultations on the Authority's behalf. The Treasurer also confirmed that internal audit services were provided by Conwy County Borough Council as part of the Authority's Financial Services' Service Level Agreement with the Council. The Authority:

**Resolved: - to approve:**

- i to delegate its powers in relation to certain audit matters to the Executive Panel; and***
- ii that the Panel's terms of reference be amended as follows to reflect its additional powers:  
"2.5 In addition the Executive Panel shall act as the Fire Authority's audit committee in accordance with CIPFA's guidance "Audit Committees: Practical Guidance for Local Authorities". This shall include approval of the internal audit strategy, the annual programme of internal and external audit and the annual audit report".***

**10) Proposals for inclusion in the Authority's Risk Reduction Plan 2008/09**

The Chief Fire Officer introduced his report (previously circulated) which informed members of the Executive Panel's recommendations in relation to the options the Authority should include in its Risk Reduction Plan (RRP) Action Plan for 2008/09. In addition the report also sought the Authority's approval for the inclusion of the listed proposals in the draft Action Plan that would be presented to members at the Authority's next meeting in June for approval to go out for public consultation. The Chief Fire Officer detailed the report's contents and explained that as the Authority had produced a complete RRP and Action Plan for 2007/08 it was permitted, if it wished, to produce a revised action plan for the following two years. Members were reminded that before the Authority could approve the draft Action Plan for public consultation it was required to informally discuss its proposals with the WAG's Minister for Social Justice and Regeneration. Members were informed by officers that, in the recent consultation on the draft National Framework (Wales) (Revisions) Order 2007, the WAG had proposed the inclusion of an additional stipulation to re-consult the Minister following the completion of the public consultation stage and prior to the Plan's approval. The Clerk advised members that such a proviso was unprecedented in local government. He also informed the Authority that recent consultations issued by the WAG had particularly tight deadlines within which to respond and even

when the Authority responded and raised pertinent issues, these were rarely acted upon.

The Chief Fire Officer advised members that the proposals for inclusion in the draft Action Plan encompassed the Service's adage: "Preventing, Protecting, Responding". The financial implications of the proposals were not yet fully known, but any additional costs in one area would need to be financed from efficiency savings in other areas.

The Vice-Chairman welcomed the report and the proposals for inclusion in the draft RRP Action Plan. In his view these proposals would be fundamental to the Authority's strategy to reduce the number of fire deaths in the area. He requested that staff representative bodies be engaged in the consultation process at the earliest possible opportunity. On the issue of fire deaths the Chief Fire Officer informed members that the Task Group, established by him in the wake of the increase in the number of deaths in dwelling fires, was in the process of finalising its report. It was his intention to arrange an event for members at which the Task Group would present their findings. Members:

**Resolved:** -

- i to sanction the Executive Panel's recommendation to include the proposals listed in the report in the draft Action Plan that will be presented to the Authority at its June meeting for approval to go out to public consultation; and***
- ii in the meantime, to proceed to initiate an informal discussion on the proposals with the Welsh Assembly Government's Minister for Social Justice and Regeneration.***

## **11) Community Fire Safety Activities**

The Deputy Chief Fire Officer introduced his report and appendices (previously circulated) which, in response to members' request at the Authority's previous meeting, updated them on the Community Fire Safety (CFS) activities undertaken by all fire stations. He then introduced Mr Mark Jones the Service's CFS Manager to members. Mr Jones, with the aid of a PowerPoint presentation, detailed the report's contents including the hours of CFS work undertaken by Wholetime/Day Crewed and Retained Duty System (RDS) fire stations and the financial implications to the Authority of this work. Mr Jones explained that following the Chief Fire Officer's letter, of October 2006, to all personnel there had been a marked increase in the amount of CFS work undertaken. Members' attention were drawn to Appendices D and E to the report which detailed the range of CFS and community safety initiatives with which the Service was involved in an attempt to meet the wider social justice and regeneration agenda.

Mr Jones explained that in its attempt to reduce the number of fire fatalities in dwellings the Service had just taken delivery of a number of mobile sprinkler units. One of these units had been assembled in the meeting room for members' benefit. He explained that the intention was for these types of units to be installed in the homes of vulnerable people: individuals who had been identified, due to mobility or mental health problems, as being at greater risk from injury or death due to fire. Having these types of sprinklers installed in their dwellings would give them a greater chance of survival, as the sprinkler would suppress the fire, reduce its impact and the risk of it spreading. All County Safety Managers in North Wales would, if required, have access to these sprinkler units. Officers expected to install the first unit in a vulnerable person's home before the end of the week. By means of a DVD, produced by Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service, members had the opportunity to see the effectiveness of this type of unit in a fire situation. The Deputy Chief Fire Officer stressed that mobile sprinklers were only a temporary or interim solution: domestic sprinklers connected to the dwelling's water system would be the optimum long-term solution. He proceeded to explain that, through a joint funding arrangement, a house in Ynys Môn had recently been fitted with domestic sprinklers.

Replying to members' questions the CFS Manager advised the Authority that the mobile sprinkler units were purchased from a commercial company at a cost of approximately £900 each plus VAT. He proceeded to explain that he was not sure if the general public could purchase the units direct from the manufacturers or if local authorities were aware of their existence. The Deputy Chief Fire Officer informed members that the Service was currently working with the WAG on a method of identifying vulnerable people across Wales. On the issue of identifying vulnerable citizens the Chief Fire Officer and Deputy Chief Fire Officer confirmed that work was underway on a North Wales wide Data Sharing Protocol between, amongst others, local authorities, health service, emergency services and the Social Services Improvement Agency (SSIA). The Chief Fire Officer informed members that he had received positive feedback following his letter to all North Wales local authority Leaders and Chief Executives requesting their cooperation in his bid to reduce the number of fire deaths. A number of officers had since been seconded to work for set periods of time at council or health service departments. These secondments were a means of building bridges, eliminating barriers and forging a climate of mutual understanding and trust between the Service and other public sector providers with a view to assisting each other to share information and to improve people's lives.

In response to a question on the fitting of sprinkler systems in schools members were advised that a Wales wide risk assessment was currently underway, the purpose of which was to identify those schools most at risk from arson. Recently the WAG's Minister for Social Justice and Regeneration had announced that £4m was being made available from the CFS budget to assist with the funding for the installation of sprinklers in new and refurbished school projects. It had been hoped that an announcement would be made regarding additional funding towards the installation of sprinklers in schools from the Assembly's

Education Budget, but such an announcement was now unlikely before the elections to the National Assembly. Although £4m was a modest amount compared to the cost of fitting sprinkler systems in all schools, it was a welcome announcement and a step in the right direction. It was also contrary to the situation in England.

Responding to a question from Councillor P C Evans officers advised that all categories of fire stations were being used for various community activities, although none of these stations would be available for community use to the extent of the purpose built Community Fire Station planned for Rhyl. Councillor G Williams requested that the Authority make it clear that there would be a cost involved for community organisations that wished to use fire stations for their own activities. He also enquired whether the 'Impact Roadshow' travelled throughout North Wales, or whether it only served the Wrexham area. The Chief Fire Officer advised Councillor Williams that the 'Roadshow' was based in Wrexham as it was crewed by personnel from Wrexham fire station, but that it provided demonstrations the length and breadth of North Wales. This initiative also had costs attached to it. Members were further advised by the Chief Fire Officer that more information on initiatives such as the 'Impact Roadshow', including their associated costs, would be provided through the RRP process. The Chief Fire Officer registered his concern that other areas of the Service's work may be suffering due to its involvement with so many other different initiatives, campaigns and partnerships. It may be that in an attempt at being everything for everybody the Service was spreading its resources too thinly to its own detriment. Councillor S Frobisher extended her congratulations to the Denbighshire County Safety Team for the excellent and hard-hitting road safety event which had been held at Llysfasi College on 9<sup>th</sup> March 2007. She requested that a letter be sent to the Team to thank them for their efforts.

Replying to a question from Councillor W J Chorlton, on whether the fact that firefighters were now expected to undertake more CFS work would impact on their physical fitness for operational duties as they would not have as much time whilst on duty to sustain their fitness levels, the Chief Fire Officer questioned whether it was an effective and efficient use of the Authority's resources to permit personnel to undertake physical fitness training during their time on duty. Councillor Chorlton was of the view that the Authority had a duty to maintain firefighters' fitness levels or it would otherwise have an adverse effect on the Service's sickness levels.

On the issue of whether the Authority levied a charge for attending certain incidents and events members were advised that, where it was allowed to charge, the Authority levied the maximum permitted for the services provided. But, to date, despite the Authority's persistent lobbying on the issue of permitting fire and rescue authorities to charge for responding to recurring false alarms from automatic fire alarms systems the WAG had failed to bring forward legislation that would enable this to be done. Members thanked officers for the report and presentation and:

**Resolved: - to note the information provided.**

## **12) Proposed Amendment to Standing Orders**

The Clerk introduced his report (previously circulated) which, in order to accommodate the requirements of the RRP process, proposed an amendment to the Authority's Standing Orders in relation to the date of its autumn business meeting. He explained that the report outlined the background to the proposed amendment and, in line with Standing Order 2(2), if the amendment was moved and seconded at the current meeting any debate on the amendment would stand adjourned until the Authority's next meeting. It was:

**Resolved: - to note the amendment to Standing Order 4(2) and that a discussion on the amendment be held at the Authority's next meeting on 18<sup>th</sup> June 2007.**

## **13) Rank to Role (Supplementary)**

The Assistant Chief Fire Officer (Service Delivery) introduced his report (previously circulated) providing members with the additional information which they had requested on extending pay protection arrangements, following the previous report on the Rank to Role assimilation process on 18<sup>th</sup> December 2006. He explained that the remaining management level assimilations and appeals how now been completed and that the report detailed the cost implications to the Authority of extending pay protection to personnel beyond the National Joint Council's (NJC) agreed protection of three years from the date of assimilation/appeal. Members were advised of the wider legal implications of extending the pay protection beyond the nationally agreed three year limit. Members:

**Resolved: -**

- i to note the contents of the report and the financial implications;***
- ii to note that any pay protection in excess of three years would be outside of the NJC agreement signed by all relevant parties; and***
- iii that the Authority pays three years protection in line with the NJC agreement.***

## **14) Draft Disability Scheme**

The Deputy Chief Fire Officer presented his report and North Wales Fire and Rescue Service's draft Disability Equality Scheme 2006/09 (previously circulated). He explained that, in line with other public bodies, the Authority had a duty to promote disability equality and to publish its functions and policies that were pertinent with this duty. The Draft Disability Equality Scheme, similar to the Race Equality Scheme which the Executive Panel had approved on 24<sup>th</sup> January 2007, was one of a number of Schemes which the Authority was required by legislation

to approve and publish. It was the Service's intention, when all current Schemes expired, to incorporate all the Schemes into one document which would be more user-friendly for staff and the general public alike.

Councillor M Griffith enquired whether, as she and a number of other members had not received the draft Scheme in time to read it before the meeting, the decision to approve the Scheme could be adjourned until the Authority's next meeting. The Clerk advised Councillor Griffith that all public authorities had been expected to approve and adopt their Disability Equality Schemes by December 2006, although North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority was not alone in not having achieved this before the statutory deadline. His recommendation would be for the Authority to approve, in principle, the draft Disability Equality Scheme and if members, after having time to study the Scheme, had questions they wished to raise this could be done at the Authority's next meeting, with any consequential amendments being incorporated into the Scheme at that time. It was:

***Resolved: - in principle, to approve and adopt the Disability Equality Scheme 2006/09 and that any questions members wish to raise, or amendments required to the Scheme, be discussed at the Authority's next meeting on 18<sup>th</sup> June 2007.***

#### **15) Appointment of Independent Members of Standards Committee**

The Clerk introduced his report (previously circulated) requesting the Authority to consider the number of independent members of the Standards Committee and arrangements for filling any vacancies. He detailed the contents of his report and informed members that the term of office of one of the independent members was due to expire in September 2007. Following a recent change in legislation, authorities were now permitted to reappoint an independent member for a further term of up to four years. If a current member was to be reappointed there was no requirement on the Authority to advertise the vacancy. The Clerk drew members' attention to paragraph 4 of his report which advised the Authority of the Standards Committee's view regarding the reappointment of the independent member whose term of office was due to expire and of its wish to see the size of the Committee increased from 5 to 6 members, 4 of whom would be independent members. In reply to a question the Clerk advised that the reason for the request to increase the number of members to 6 was for quorum purposes. Currently, with 5 members, the Authority's Standards Committee had the minimum permitted number of members and if more than one independent member was unable to attend a meeting quorum requirements could not be met. The Clerk also explained that, bearing in mind that a cooptee's allowance may soon be payable to independent members, and the travelling expenses payable, increasing the number of members to 6 would have a modest cost implication for the Authority. Members:

***Resolved: - that***

- i Mr Simon Fysh be reappointed as an independent member of the Standards Committee with effect from September 2007 for a term of four years;***
- ii the Standards Committee should have four independent members and the vacancy should be advertised;***
- iii the appointment of the lay panel member for the advisory panel should be delegated to the Chair, Chief Fire Officer and the Clerk; and***
- iv Councillors P C Evans JP, W J Chorlton, N S Colbourne and W T Owen be appointed to serve on the advisory panel.***

## **16) Annual Report of the Standards Committee**

The Clerk introduced the Standards Committee's third annual report (previously circulated) which detailed the Committee's activities during the 2006/07 year and the Committee's recommendation that all Fire and Rescue Authority and Standards Committee members should receive training on the revised Code of Conduct when it comes into force. It was:

**Resolved: - to note the contents of the report and the training that will be required on the revised code of conduct when it comes into force.**

## **17) Progressing the Wales Charter for Member Support and Development**

The Member Liaison Officer introduced her report (previously circulated) requesting the Authority to establish a dedicated working group to be responsible for identifying members' developmental and support needs and consequently to progress the Authority's bid to receive accreditation under the Wales Charter for Member Support and Development. Members were also requested to consider the feasibility of combining the remit of the Member Support and Development Working Group with that of the recently established Community Fire Safety Champions Working Group. The Member Liaison Officer detailed the background to the Wales Charter for Member Support and Development and the Authority's resolution to pursue Charter accreditation in due course. She explained that before the Authority could apply for the Charter award it was required to establish a Member Support and Development Working Group which would be responsible for sponsoring a members' support and development programme and strategy. She proceeded to explain that as the Authority had recently established a Community Fire Safety Champions Working Group the remit of this Group could be extended to include member support and development. The benefits of this approach would be two-fold: in addition to demonstrating an efficient use of resources, whilst promoting community safety issues and forging stronger links between local government departments, the general public and the Service the CFS Champions Working Group members would be ideally placed to identify members' support and development needs.

Councillor P C Evans was of the view that combining the roles of the Member Support and Development Working Group with that of the CFS Champions

Working Group would further restrict the role of backbench Authority members. Personally, he was in favour of establishing a separate Member Support and Development Working Group. This view was echoed by a number of members. Councillor Evans proposed an amendment to the second recommendation listed in the report: that the Authority should establish a separate Member Support and Development Working Group. This amendment was seconded and when put to the vote, by a majority, was defeated. It was:

**Resolved: -**

- i to approve the establishment of a Working Group to promote and progress members' support and development;***
- ii to approve combining the remit of the Member Support and Development Group with that of the Community Fire Safety Champions Working Group; and;***
- iii that the Working Group be tasked with assessing the Authority's position in relation to applying for Charter recognition status and, in due course, with drafting the Authority's application for approval for submission.***

**18) Informative**

The Chief Fire Officer presented the Authority with the latest issue of the 'Informative' magazine. Members:

**Resolved: - to accept the publication**

**19) Urgent Matters**

None.

The Chairman informed members that it was recommended that the remaining items of business on the meeting's agenda be discussed without the public or Press present. It was:

**Resolved: - pursuant to Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act, 1972 that the Press and Public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following item of business because it was likely that there would be disclosed to them exempt information as defined in Paragraphs 1, 8, 9 and 10 of Part I of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act, 1972.**

**PART II**

**20) Review of Retained Duty System and Part-time Community Fire Safety Practitioners**

The Deputy Chief Fire Officer introduced his report (previously circulated) asking the Authority to ratify the Executive Panel's recommendation in relation to the

proposed changes in the method by which the Service delivered its Community Fire Safety (CFS) activities by personnel on the Retained Duty System (RDS) working as Part Time CFS Practitioners. He explained that the report detailed the background and the reasons that had led officers to conclude that a change in culture and in the method by which this particular element of the Service's work is delivered was required if the Authority was to be successful in driving down the number of fire fatalities in the area. The report also detailed the financial implications of adopting the change in the method of delivery. The Chief Fire Officer emphasised to members that the objective of the proposed changes in the method of delivery was to increase the Service's capacity to deliver its CFS programme. In order for this to be achieved the Authority had to utilise its resources in the most cost effective and efficient manner.

12.45pm Councillor G O Williams left the meeting at this juncture.

In reply to members' questions officers advised that several options had been explored but, following receipt of legal advice from employment law experts Eversheds, the option presented to members had been identified as the optimum solution. Although the Fire Brigades Union (FBU) was not privy to the report in members' possession, Union representatives were aware of the proposals for the change in the method of delivery. The five new posts, which would be charged with delivering CFS work across North Wales, would be advertised in the local press. Following an in-depth discussion on the proposals presented to them members:

**Resolved: - to**

- i note the contents of the report;***
- ii acknowledge that CFS is the core responsibility of all Firefighters;***
- iii ratify the Executive Panel's recommendation;***
- iv agree that the compensation to be paid in terminating the specific contracts of retained duty personnel in relation to Home Fire Safety Check work be calculated on the basis of the Department of Trade and Industry's (DTI) statutory redundancy calculator and***
- v note that five full time personnel be employed under the Green Book Conditions of Service to undertake Home Fire Safety Checks.***

Prior to the meeting's conclusion Councillor S Frobisher requested that her gratitude to all personnel who attended the recent fire at the Ffrith Festival Gardens at Prestatyn be recorded. Councillor Frobisher stated that the Service's swift action had resulted in the fire being contained and to the damage being limited.

The meeting concluded at 12.55pm.