

NORTH WALES FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY

Minutes of the Executive Panel Meeting of the North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority held on 1st February 2010 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 B Dunn	Flintshire County Council
Cllr G C Evans	Denbighshire County Council
Cllr T Evans	Wrexham County Borough Council
Cllr G James	Flintshire County Council
Cllr P Jeffares	Wrexham County Borough Council
Cllr W T Owen	Gwynedd Council
Cllr T Roberts	Gwynedd Council
Cllr W P Roberts	Conwy County Borough Council
Cllr M Thomas	Conwy County Borough Council

ALSO PRESENT:

S A Smith (Chief Fire Officer and Chief Executive); D Docx (Deputy Chief Fire Officer); K Finch (Treasurer); B Davies (Monitoring Officer); C Hanks, P Claydon and R Simmons (Assistant Chief Fire Officers); R Fairhead (Senior Fire Safety Manager); G Griffiths (Senior Operations Manager); L Roberts (Control Manager); S Morris (Corporate Planning Manager); T Williams (Corporate Communications Manager); I Williams (Executive Support Manager); A Davies (Member Liaison Officer).

Apologies:

Cllr S Frobisher	Denbighshire County Council
Cllr L W Davies	Anglesey County Council
Cllr J V Owen	Anglesey County Council
C Everett	Clerk to the Authority

Before the meeting started, the Chief Fire Officer spoke about the tragic deaths of two firefighters at the beginning of January. Robbie Gallacher passed away on 1st January and Gareth Rees on 5th January. A former Sub Officer of the Service, Ken Jones, passed away on 6th January. Officers and Members had attended the funerals and support was ongoing for families and colleagues affected. 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 16TH NOVEMBER 2009

2.1 The minutes of the meeting held on 16th November 2009 were approved as a true and correct record.

3 MATTERS ARISING

- 3.1 *Capital Programme 2009/10* - the Welsh Assembly had agreed to contribute up to £1m towards the capital programme. In order to be eligible to receive the contribution all the work has to be completed by the end of March 2010.

4 RISK REDUCTION PLANNING

- 4.1 The Deputy Chief Fire Officer updated Members on progress with the RRP for 2010/11. Due to the snow the RRP working group meeting on 8th January had been cancelled and therefore the first meeting of the year had been held on 25th January.

- 4.2 During the meeting, the working group discussed position statements in relation to the consultation issues of 2009. The working group recommended that the Executive Panel accept the following position statements:

- Working with young people - the Authority is fully supportive of the Service's work with the youth and is aware that the Assembly has commissioned a piece of work on the future of working with young people and children within the fire and rescue services in Wales. The Chief Fire Officer has been asked by the WAG to lead a task and finish group to develop a children and young people fire and rescue strategy. The final report will be ready by March. Members look forward to receiving the strategy at a future meeting.
- Retained Duty System - the Authority notes that the Assembly has established a committee to undertake a RDS review. The Authority looks forward to the review and is supportive of innovative and flexible arrangements being considered to sustain fire cover in rural areas.
- Co-responding - the Authority has decided not to pursue the co-responding scheme.

- 4.3 The working group then looked at the various proposals submitted in the Integrated Risk Management Plans (IRMP) and Risk Reduction Plans (RRP) since 2004/05 and received updates regarding many proposals that continued to be work in progress.

- 4.4 The working group had been informed that one of the Aerial Ladder Platform appliances was coming to the end of its service and the Authority needed to consider whether or not it should be replaced. The working group will receive further information on the deployment of the ALP appliances at its next meeting on 8th February.

- 4.5 The working group recommended that the Authority include the following in its action plan for 2011/12:

- Business continuity and resilience
- Equality and diversity

- Officer cover review
- Aerial Ladder Platform.

4.6 **RESOLVED to agree the recommendations made by the RRP Working Group and that a further update will be provided at the next Executive Panel meeting.**

5 PERFORMANCE MONITORING

5.1 The report was presented to provide Members with information about the Service's activity and performance for the period April – September 2009. The Deputy Chief Fire Officer highlighted the following areas:

5.2 The overall number of fires had increased by 5%. The increase was due to secondary and chimney fires as the figure for primary fires was similar to previous years.

5.3 The number of accidental fires in dwellings had decreased and this could be due to the prevention work undertaken by the Service.

5.4 There had been a sudden increase in the number of fires in non-domestic properties and further investigation into this area is underway.

5.5 Over recent years due to the programme of home fire safety checks there has been a noticeable increase in the number of dwellings attended that have had working smoke alarms. This year, there has been a reduction in this percentage which could be attributed to fires occurring more frequently in properties occupied by people who are unwilling to take responsibility for their own safety.

5.6 In response to a question about the calls received by Control it was confirmed that not all calls received were via the 999 phone number.

5.7 In response to a question about the automatic fire alarm calls, it was confirmed that the Service does not wait for confirmation before attending. The Chief Fire Officers' Association had issued guidance which had been worked into the Service's policies and the Service has a robust process for dealing with such incidents.

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

6 HEALTH AND SAFETY EXECUTIVE REPORT

6.1 The Chief Fire Officer informed Members that a draft report on the HSE inspection held in December 2009 had been received, and was positive overall. The Chief Fire Officer has been asked to provide comments on the report prior to the final version being issued.

6.2 Members thanked all those concerned for the work done for the HSE inspection.

6.3 **RESOLVED to note the information and that the final version will be presented to the Authority.**

7 SUPPORTING OPERATIONAL PERFORMANCE

7.1 ACFO Simmons gave Members a presentation on supporting operational performance. The presentation highlighted the importance of operational training within North Wales Fire and Rescue Service to ensure safe and competent operational performance by firefighters.

7.2 Operational learning and development is considered as risk critical and this was evidenced by the Health and Safety Executive's inspection programme. ACFO Simmons explained the safe person concept and that the two aspects of this are organisational and personal responsibilities. The ACFO explained the areas that the HSE inspection had focused on - breathing apparatus, incident command and operational intelligence - and how the Service's training and development procedures were essential to ensure firefighters maintained their competence in these areas.

7.3 The Service had made a number of changes to its management of operational learning and development with new policies and strategies being published. Annual audits of training records are undertaken to ensure the currency of skills and the frequency of assessments for all firefighters. Due to the significant role of the line managers in managing incidents and supporting firefighters, core skills updates and assessments have recently been introduced for line managers.

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

8 PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT

8.1 The report was presented to inform Members about the all-Wales procurement project for new personal protective equipment (PPE). The old and new PPE were displayed at the meeting.

8.2 The Senior Operations Manager informed Members that although the current PPE meets relevant European standards and is fit for purpose it was based on specifications developed over 15 years ago; firefighters' welfare and safety was essential.

8.3 Officers from North Wales Fire and Rescue Service have taken an active part in the project including the trials of various kits. The new PPE is lighter than the previous specification and the most important criteria, thermal protection, scored at least 17% higher than its nearest rival.

8.4 The cost of the new PPE would be covered by one capital payment rather than revenue payments over the 7 years of the contract. As part of the contract the company will be responsible for the maintenance of the PPE, the cost of which will be half of what the Service is currently paying. The project team had drafted the contract and the procurement units of the three

Services are working with lawyers to ensure the contract is suitable for all three Services.

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

9 UPDATE ON DOMESTIC SPRINKLERS LEGISLATIVE COMPETENCE ORDER (LCO)

9.1 Since the report had been distributed to Members there had been a further development with the LCO. On 27th January the LCO had been approved unanimously at the Senedd. The First Minister had written to the Secretary of State for Wales in preparation for the arrival of the LCO at Westminster. It is expected that its passage through both Houses will be expedited and once approved, the Assembly can finalise the Measure without it having to be approved again by Westminster.

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

10 APPOINTMENT PROCESS FOR THE POST OF ASSISTANT CHIEF FIRE OFFICER

10.1 Prior to introducing this report, the Chief Fire Officer asked all officers to leave the meeting apart from the Deputy Chief Fire Officer and the Member Liaison Officer.

10.2 The report was presented to inform Members about the arrangements for the recruitment to the vacant post of Assistant Chief Fire Officer. Members at the December Authority meeting had discussed the post and decided that the post should be filled on a permanent basis as soon as possible.

10.3 The Chief Fire Officer informed Members of the key dates of the process and that the final interviews will be held early in March with a view to confirming the appointment at the Authority meeting on 15th March.

10.4 **RESOLVED to:**

- (i) **approve the process as outlined; and**
- (ii) **confirm the membership of the appointments committee as follows: Chair, Vice-Chair, Cllr B Dunn, Cllr T Evans, Cllr T Roberts and Cllr M Thomas.**