

## **NORTH WALES FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY**

Minutes of the meeting of North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority held on Monday 15<sup>th</sup> June 2009 at Council Chamber, Mold. Meeting commenced at 11am.

### **PRESENT**

<b>Councillor</b>	<b>Representing</b>
S Frobisher (Chairman)	Denbighshire County Council
A M Jones (Vice-Chairman)	Anglesey County Council
D Barratt	Flintshire County Council
B Blackmore	Wrexham County Borough Council
L W Davies	Anglesey County Council
M Ll Davies	Denbighshire County Council
R M Davies	Wrexham County Borough Council
B Dunn	Flintshire County Council
G C Evans	Denbighshire County Council
P C Evans	Conwy County Borough Council
T Evans	Wrexham County Borough Council
M Griffith	Gwynedd Council
G James	Flintshire County Council
P Jeffares	Wrexham County Borough Council
E M Jones	Gwynedd Council
N M Jones	Flintshire County Council
W E Jones	Conwy County Borough Council
W Knightly	Conwy County Borough Council
D Mackie	Flintshire County Council
A Minshull	Flintshire County Council
J V Owen	Anglesey County Council
W T Owen	Gwynedd Council
T Roberts	Gwynedd Council
A Tansley	Conwy County Borough Council
M Thomas	Conwy County Borough Council
G Williams	Denbighshire County Council
G O Williams	Gwynedd Council

### **Also present:**

S A Smith (Chief Fire Officer and Chief Executive); C P Everett (Clerk and Monitoring Officer to the Authority); K W Finch (Treasurer to the Authority); D Docx (Deputy Chief Fire Officer); C Hanks, P Claydon and R Simmons (Assistant Chief Officers); G W Griffiths (Senior Operations Manager); R Fairhead (Senior Fire Safety Manager); G Brandrick (Training and Development Manager); S Morris (Corporate Planning Manager); T Williams (Corporate Communications Manager); L Roberts MBE (Control Room

Manager); I Williams (Executive Support Manager); C Dingle (Finance Manager); S Forrest (Accountant, Treasurer's Department, Conwy County Borough Council); A Davies (Member Liaison Officer) and S Jones (Member Liaison Assistant).

## APOLOGIES

### **Councillor**

### **Representing**

E C George

Wrexham County Borough Council

#### 1 NOTICE OF URGENT MATTERS

1.1 The Chairman advised that no items had been submitted to the Clerk for consideration.

#### 2 DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

2.1 There were no declarations of interests.

#### 3 MINUTES

3.1 The minutes of the Fire and Rescue Authority meeting held on 16<sup>th</sup> March 2009 were submitted for approval.

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

#### 4 MATTERS ARISING

4.1 *14 - Combined Fire and Rescue Authorities' Reserves – a letter received from Dr Brian Gibbons AM was circulated to Members informing them that it had been agreed that fire and rescue authorities could hold reserves following legislation changes. The Treasurer explained that he did not anticipate any problems for North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority with the changes to be made to the Combination Order.*

#### 5 CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

5.1 The report presented listed meetings and events attended by Cllr Trevor Roberts and Cllr Sharon Frobisher in their capacity as Chairman and Vice-Chairman covering the period March to early June 2009.

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

- 6 2009 CONSULTATION ON RISK REDUCTION PLAN (RRP)
- 6.1 Members were requested to approve the draft 2009 RRP consultation document.
- 6.2 The Deputy Chief Fire Officer explained that the consultation document had been written in a format that would enable a discussion with the people of North Wales about their expectations of the Fire and Rescue Service. The document presented four main questions on work with young people, co-responding, RDS system and efficiencies. Feedback and comments received would be presented to the Authority in October.
- 6.3 A subgroup of the RRP Working Group had worked on the document and Members were encouraged to get their local communities involved in the consultation.
- 6.4 **RESOLVED to:**
- (i) note and approve the intention to continue with, and consolidate, previously agreed RRP action plans during 2010-11;**
  - (ii) note and approve the intention to consult stakeholders about four fundamental principles (RRP topics) over the summer of 2009, to guide the work of risk reduction planning during 2010-11 for publication in an RRP action plan by 31 October 2010; and**
  - (iii) approve the consultation document for immediate publication and distribution.**
- 7 STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS 2008-2009
- 7.1 The report was presented to seek Members' approval of the draft Statement of Accounts for 2008-2009 in accordance with the provision of the Accounts and Audit (Wales) Regulations 2005. The draft Statement of Accounts had been made available to KPMG and the final accounts will be submitted to the Authority later in the year.
- 7.2 The Treasurer explained that the budgeting for 2008/2009 had been done well and this was testament to the way officers had planned and controlled expenditure during the year.
- 7.3 In response to a Member's question regarding the £734,000 underspend on employees' costs, it was noted that this was due to a gap between posts becoming vacant and being filled and also recruitment issues with the Retained Duty System.

7.4 **RESOLVED to approve the draft Statement of Accounts for the financial year ended 31 March 2009.**

8 TREASURY MANAGEMENT ACTIVITY AND ACTUAL PRUDENTIAL INDICATORS FOR 2008-2009

8.1 The annual treasury report was presented as a requirement of the Authority's reporting procedures and covered the treasury activity for 2008-2009. The report also detailed the actual Prudential Indicators for 2008-2009 in accordance with the requirements of the Prudential Code.

8.2 The Treasurer informed Members that the banking crisis had not affected the Authority as no money had been invested in Icelandic banks. However, the reduction in interest rates and the amount of money that could be invested had some effect. Members congratulated the Treasurer on this work.

8.3 **RESOLVED to:**

**(i) approve the actual 2008-2009 Prudential Indicators; and**

**(ii) note the report on the Treasury Management activities for 2008-2009.**

9 ANNUAL REPORT OF BAD DEBTS WRITTEN OFF

9.1 The report was presented to inform Members of the bad debts write off between 1<sup>st</sup> April 2008 and 31<sup>st</sup> March 2009.

9.2 **RESOLVED to note the information.**

10 JOINT RISK ASSESSMENT AND RISK ASSESSMENT TEMPLATE

10.1 Rob Powell from the Wales Audit Office presented the papers. He explained that the Risk Assessment Template was based on the Welsh Assembly Government's risk plan and had been worked on by officers of the Audit Office and North Wales Fire and Rescue Service.

10.2 In response to a Member's question about sickness absence being above the Welsh target, the Chief Fire Officer explained that this was, in part, due to the Authority's policy in trying to retain people in the Service as long as possible; in order to reduce sickness absence people would have to retire on ill-health grounds which the Authority tried to avoid.

- 10.3 The Joint Risk Assessment had been undertaken by a peer review team (officers from other Fire and Rescue Authorities) and KPMG were also heavily involved.
- 10.4 The Assessment was positive and showed that the Authority had made progress in reducing risk at operational and non-operational levels. The level of risk remained high in the following areas: reducing the loss of life and injuries, service standards and the current policy around co-responding. The retained duty system was considered to be a medium level of risk and it was noted that a RDS review was underway.
- 10.5 It was also noted that the establishment of the Audit Committee would help support good governance.
- 10.6 **RESOLVED to note the joint risk assessment and risk assessment template.**

#### 11 PERFORMANCE INFORMATION 2008-2009 (PROVISIONAL DATA)

- 11.1 Members received a presentation on the 2008-09 performance information which would be audited and published in the Improvement Plan at the end of October.
- 11.2 There had been an overall reduction in the number of fires during the period and this was attributable to fewer secondary fires (both deliberate and accidental). There had been an increase in chimney fires between October and March.
- 11.3 Firefighters were attending more road traffic collisions now due to a new procedure set up with the Ambulance Service whereby they inform the Service's control staff immediately when an ambulance is called out to a road traffic collision.
- 11.4 The figures for the all-Wales standard for "dwelling fires meeting the 5-minute service standard locally" was lower for 2008-09 however this did not necessarily mean a deterioration in performance merely that as it was a new standard it was too early to analyse the figures properly. It was noted that the WAG had implemented a review of the standard and was looking at ways of calculating the figures meaningfully.
- 11.4 The figures for community fire safety work included the number of home fire safety checks (31,180) undertaken, publicity events attended, fire safety talks and school visits – which made the total audience reached 118,963 i.e. 17.5% of the population.
- 11.5 There had been a slight increase in fires in non-domestic premises, however percentage-wise this was a figure of less than 1%. 861 fire

safety audits at non-domestic fire had been undertaken with 36 enforcement notices and 18 prohibition notices served.

- 11.6 The number of malicious false alarms received had reduced and false alarms from automatic fire alarms had also reduced due to the Service working with premises and business owners to identify any problems.
- 11.7 Over 10,000 invoices were processed annually and 92.2% of those were paid in under 30 days from the day they were received.
- 11.8 In response to a Member's question about the control room situation with the ambulance service, the Chief Fire Officer informed Members that an outline business case was due to be submitted to the Assembly and subject to its approval a full business case would be drawn up for approval, thereafter the process of relocating the ambulance service to the Joint Communications Centre could commence.
- 11.9 **RESOLVED to note the information provided.**

## 12 HOME FIRE SAFETY CHECKS

- 12.1 The report was presented to inform Members of the total number of home fire safety checks carried out by North Wales Fire and Rescue Service in 2008/2009.
- 12.2 Members congratulated the Service on exceeding the target of 30,000.
- 12.3 The Chief Fire Officer reminded Members that this level of achievement was not sustainable with resources as they are currently configured. If this phenomenal achievement were to continue it would impact on other areas of the Service, therefore it was vital to reallocate resources in order to ensure that training and operational issues were not affected.
- 12.4 Cllr M Ll Davies commented that the figures in the performance presentation demonstrated the importance of home fire safety checks and that any cuts in funding for this area of work would need to be considered carefully.
- 12.5 In response to a Member's question about fire safety checks at business premises, it was confirmed that under the current fire safety legislation the nominated responsible person at the premises is required to carry out a risk assessment which is subsequently audited by Enforcement and Inspecting Officers.
- 12.6 **RESOLVED to note the information.**

### 13 MEMBERS' REMUNERATION SCHEME

- 13.1 Members had considered the Members' Remuneration Scheme at the March meeting and had requested further information on care allowance and method of claiming subsistence allowance. In addition to these issues, the report submitted contained updated information on the increases applied by the constituent authorities to Councillors' Basic and Special Responsibilities Allowances for 2008/09.
- 13.2 The Clerk presented the paper and explained that the Independent Remuneration Panel recommended the introduction of a care allowance to be consistent with constituent authorities. He went on to explain that the subsistence allowance of £28 could be claimed flexibly over a period of 24 hours but that claims had to be reasonable within the expectations of people in public office.
- 13.3 The Treasurer informed Members that incorrect information had been received from some constituent authorities about increases applied to Councillors' Basic and Special Responsibility Allowances for 2008/09. This meant that the overall average increase across all 6 authorities was 1.67%. As a result, Members had received a slight over-payment which would be corrected in the July payroll.
- 13.4 In response to a Member's question based on remuneration in constituent authorities, the Treasurer explained that this was a requirement in the Local Authorities (Allowances for Members) (Wales) Regulations 2007. Members felt that the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Audit Committee should receive a special responsibility allowance, but the Treasurer and Clerk confirmed that this was not possible under the current Regulations.
- 13.5 Cllr P C Evans proposed that the Clerk send a letter on behalf of the Authority to propose that the Regulations be amended so that Fire and Rescue Authorities could set their own increases or that an Independent Remuneration Panel had responsibility to set the allowance nationally. The Clerk reminded Members that the other Fire and Rescue Authorities in Wales would need to support this proposal prior to any formal letters being sent to the Assembly or the Independent Remuneration Panel.
- 13.6 **RESOLVED to:**
- (i) introduce a care allowance to Members of the North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority;**

- (ii) agree to a flexible and reasonable approach to subsistence allowance with a maximum (receipted) amount available to claim, in any one period, being not more than £28;**
- (iii) note and approve the corrected information on allowances;**
- (iv) make representations to the Independent Remuneration Panel as per paragraph 13.5.**

#### 14 WALES CHARTER FOR MEMBER SUPPORT AND DEVELOPMENT

14.1 Members received a presentation on the Charter. The Clerk reminded Members about the aim of the Charter and the Authority's commitment to:

“creating an environment of learning and development so as to equip members with the necessary level of skills and understanding to operate efficiently and effectively”.

14.2 The Clerk informed Members of the process for conducting personal support and development interviews for Chairman and Vice-Chairman which will be later rolled out to all Members of the Authority.

14.3 Members were requested to complete an evaluation questionnaire reflecting on the first twelve months of the newly-elected Authority.

14.4 **RESOLVED to:**

- (i) re-endorse the Authority's commitment to the Charter;**
- (ii) support the Charter submission;**
- (iii) commit to Members attending at least two training sessions per year;**
- (iv) introduce a mentoring scheme for new members; and**
- (v) complete the evaluation questionnaire.**

#### 15 COMPLAINTS AND LETTERS OF APPRECIATION

15.1 The report was presented to inform Members about the number of complaints and letters of appreciation received from the public for the period April 2008 to March 2009.

15.2 At the request of Members, officers provided further information regarding some complaints. Members were pleased to see that a



number of letters and expressions of appreciation had been received from the public during the year.

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

16 CORPORATE HEALTH ACTIVITY

16.1 The report provided information about the Authority's corporate health activity. Health at Work: The Corporate Standard was a quality award scheme operated by the Welsh Assembly Government to recognise good practice in workplace health.

16.2 North Wales Fire and Rescue Service achieved the Gold Standard in February 2008 and was now preparing for an assessment against the Platinum Standard. As part of the submission, the Service will use Rhyl community fire station as a case study to show community engagement.

16.3 ACFO Simmons informed Members that 40 groups use the Rhyl community fire station and it regularly receives 1000 visitors per month.

16.4 **RESOLVED to note the information.**

17 INFORMATIVE

17.1 Members were presented with the latest issues of the 'Informative' magazine.

17.2 **RESOLVED to note the 'Informative' magazine.**

18 MINUTES FOR INFORMATION

18.1 Members noted the unconfirmed minutes of the following two meetings:

- (i) Executive Panel 11<sup>th</sup> May 2009;
- (ii) Member Support and Development and Community Safety Champions Working Group 23<sup>rd</sup> April 2009.

PART II CONFIDENTIAL

The following report had been excluded from disclosure as defined in Paragraph(s) 12 to 18 of Part 4 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.

19 SENIOR SALARY REVIEW

19.1 The report was presented to inform Members that a periodic Senior Salary Pay Review was to be undertaken.

19.2 **RESOLVED to note that a periodic senior salary review had been commissioned in line with previous agreement of North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority.**