

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

Minutes of the meeting of North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority held on Monday 17<sup>th</sup> June 2013 at Denbighshire County Council Chamber, Ruthin. Meeting commenced at 10.45am.

### **PRESENT**

#### **Councillor**

M LI Davies (Chair)  
P R Lewis (Deputy Chair)  
L W Davies  
B Dunn  
J G Evans  
J M Evans  
A Jones  
H McGuill  
D J Miles  
W R Owen  
R E Parry  
P H Pemberton  
P Penlington  
W P Shotton  
J R Skelland  
A Tansley  
W O Thomas

#### **Representing**

Denbighshire County Council  
Conwy County Borough Council  
Anglesey County Council  
Flintshire County Council  
Anglesey County Council  
Anglesey County Council  
Wrexham County Borough Council  
Flintshire County Council  
Conwy County Borough Council  
Gwynedd Council  
Conwy County Borough Council  
Wrexham County Borough Council  
Denbighshire County Council  
Flintshire County Council  
Wrexham County Borough Council  
Conwy County Borough Council  
Flintshire County 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); P Claydon, R Simmons and R Fairhead (Assistant Chief Fire Officers); G W Griffiths (Training and Development Manager); G Brandrick (Senior Fire Safety Manager); K Roberts (Senior Operations Manager); L Roberts (Senior Control and Business Continuity Manager); S Morris (Corporate Planning Manager); T Williams (Corporate Communications 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**

R Davies  
A I Dunbar  
A Evans  
J B Hughes  
L A W Jones  
G Lowe  
D A MacRae  
P Owen  
M A Reece  
W T Owen

#### **Representing**

Denbighshire County Council  
Flintshire County Council  
Wrexham County Borough Council  
Gwynedd Council  
Gwynedd Council  
Wrexham County Borough Council  
Conwy County Borough Council  
Denbighshire County Council  
Flintshire County Council  
Gwynedd Council

The Chair welcomed new Members, Cllr P Penlington (Denbighshire), Cllr L W Davies and Cllr J M Evans (Anglesey) to the meeting.

## 1 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

- 1.1 In relation to agenda item 20 – Wrexham project – the Clerk stated that Wrexham CBC members have previously received comprehensive advice on the matter. He reiterated that provided there is no detailed discussion about the land transaction, all Members can stay for the whole discussion.

## 2 MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 18 MARCH 2012

- 2.1 The minutes of the Fire and Rescue Authority meeting held on 18 March 2013 were submitted for approval.

- 2.3 **RESOLVED to approve the minutes as a true and correct record.**

## 3 MATTERS ARISING

- 3.1 3.1 Police and Crime Commissioner - Cllr A Jones asked for an update on the meeting that had taken place with the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC). The Chief Fire Officer explained that it had been an introductory meeting sharing information about the various partnerships in place between the police and the FRS. It had been agreed that the PCC and Chief Constable would meet twice a year with the Chair and Chief Fire Officer.

- 3.2 15 and 18 - ACFO Appointment Process – an advertisement for the post had been circulated and the CFO stated that the calibre of external candidates had been disappointing. Therefore, the CFO had written to all Members detailing the plans put in place for the post of ACFO, which was to appoint R Fairhead for a temporary period until November 2013 when the post will be reviewed again.

## 4 CHAIR'S REPORT

- 4.1 The Chair and Deputy Chair's report listed meetings and events attended by Cllr A M Jones and Cllr M LI Davies in their roles of Chair and Deputy Chair of North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority between March and June 2013.

- 4.2 **RESOLVED to note the information provided.**

## 5 PROTOCOL ON SOCIAL MEDIA

- 5.1 Members were asked to approve a protocol on the use of social media in meetings. Members of the Executive Panel had considered the draft protocol and recommended that it be adopted by the Authority.

5.2 Cllr A Jones supported the proposal and Cllr P Shotton felt that by accepting the protocol the Authority would be moving with the times, however, it was important that the use of social media did not distract Members during an ongoing debate. It was confirmed that this issue was referred to in the protocol. The Chief Fire Officer also informed Members that the protocol allowed for officers to tweet and monitor social media during meetings and the Corporate Communications Manager will undertake that role.

5.3 **RESOLVED to adopt the social media protocol on broadcasting and transmission from meetings.**

6 FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE 2012-2013

6.1 The Treasurer presented the report which gave Members an overview of the Authority's financial performance for 2012-13. It was noted that the Audit Committee had considered the report at its meeting and members had no major observations nor found any major risks and recommended that the Authority approved the report.

6.2 The Treasurer reminded Members that 2012-13 was the second year of a 3-year strategy agreed by the Authority to reduce the budget. The savings target for 2012-13 was £815k and the majority of that, as planned, had come from changing the firefighters' rostering system (£500k) and was achieved through natural wastage, mostly retirements. The strategy had been successful and the savings targets met along with additional savings due to careful budget management and the awareness that additional savings will be required going forward.

6.3 The Treasurer drew Members' attention to the Authority's reserves and provisions. It was noted that with the transfer of the balance of the underspend and the earmarked reserves set aside last year that were no longer needed the balance on the general reserve will be £1,609k. It was noted that whilst this figure may seem high it would ensure that funds were available to assist in future years and means that the Authority will be able to draw on these funds rather than having to request supplementary contributions from the constituent authorities. Cllr J M Evans, as a new member, enquired about various issues in the report including the underspend; the Chief Fire Officer answered the questions and clarified some points. It was noted that an induction would be arranged for new members to explain issues in more detail.

6.4 **RESOLVED to approve the transfer of the underspends in to Reserves and Provisions as detailed below:**

Contribution to Fees Provision (Wrexham)	£880,400
Revenue Contribution to Capital (Deeside)	£120,000
Contribution to Provision (Retained Pensions)	£300,000
Contribution to Earmarked Reserves	£216,000
Contribution to General Reserve	£ 32,789

## 7 TREASURY MANAGEMENT ACTIVITY AND ACTUAL PRUDENTIAL INDICATORS FOR 2012-2013

7.1 The Treasurer introduced the report which is an annual requirement of the Authority's reporting procedures. The report detailed the treasury activity and the actual prudential indicators for 2012-2013 in accordance with the requirements of the Prudential Code.

7.2 The Authority had complied with all the relevant statutory and regulatory requirements which limit the levels of risk associated with its treasury management activities. Cllr Skelland as Chair of the Audit Committee confirmed that the Committee had received a detailed presentation on the report at its last meeting and recommended that the Authority approved the report. The Treasurer paid tribute to Sandra Forrest for all her work in monitoring the treasury management issues.

7.3 **RESOLVED to approve the actual 2012-2013 Prudential Indicators.**

## 8 2012-13 PROVISIONAL UNAUDITED PERFORMANCE KEY POINTS

8.1 The Corporate Planning Manager delivered a presentation on the provisional unaudited performance figures for 2012-13. This gave Members an early opportunity to see the Service's performance for the last financial year and it was noted that the information will be formally reported through the Performance Assessment which will be published by 31 October 2013.

8.2 It was noted that there had been a reduction in the overall number of fires in Wales over the last ten years. Chimney fires were less common than previously, with fewer than two per week. The number of secondary fires (small outdoor, no casualties or rescues) tended to fluctuate, with more occurring during dry years. However, with regards to primary fires (property fires, large outdoor fires or any involving casualties or rescues) there had been a good clear rate of improvement over time, attributed partly to the prevention agenda and the focus on reducing dwelling fires and deliberate fires.

8.3 The number of accidental fire deaths in Wales had remained relatively constant, at around 19 such deaths or 0.63 per 100,000 population per year. However, the number of accidental fire injuries recorded annually had more than halved in recent years, falling from 411 in 2004/05 to 202 in 2011/12, again reflecting the emphasis put on prevention as a primary focus of FRS activity.

8.4 In relation to North Wales, and specifically to performance against the National Strategic Indicators (NSIs) set by Welsh Government, there had been an improvement against all but one element (deaths from deliberate fires in dwellings) in 2012/13 when compared with the previous year.

- 8.5 Notably, there had been a 26% reduction in the number of fires compared to 2011/12, continuing a long term downward trend. Further, there was a positive picture of improvement in the number of fires attended in non-domestic properties, which had reduced by 41% since 2007/8. Members were asked to note that there had been some over-reporting of fires in this category in the previous four years, due to a misinterpretation of the NSI definition, but that the underlying downward trend was the same. There had also been a steep drop in the number of deliberate fires compared to 2011/12 – including a 42% reduction in deliberate secondary fires and a 22% reduction in deliberate primary fires.
- 8.6 In relation to the Authority's Improvement Plan, members were asked to note the progress being made towards meeting the first Improvement Objective of keeping people and communities safe from deaths and injuries due to accidental fires in dwellings. There had been a small fluctuation in the number of injuries and deaths arising from accidental dwelling fires, and although the vast majority of injuries are categorised as 'slight' they were nevertheless significant enough to confirm the importance of maintaining a high emphasis on prevention.
- 8.7 The number of dwelling fires attended where there was no smoke alarm already present in the premises had continued to fall, providing further evidence of the effectiveness of the prevention strategy including raising public awareness.
- 8.8 The rate of home fire safety checks delivered in Wales had peaked in 2010/11 and had subsequently decreased. Nevertheless the 22,210 checks delivered in North Wales in 2012/13 represented the equivalent of 60 checks per day, with a high proportion being delivered to more vulnerable people in the community, as a result of a referral from a partner agency. The audience reached remained the same in 2012/13 as in the previous year, at 125 people per day receiving home fire safety information from trained personnel. This was in addition to the 525 school visits completed during the year, and a combined total of 25 fire safety publicity events and talks.
- 8.9 Cllr McGuill commented that it was reassuring that so many home fire safety checks were being undertaken on a daily basis. Cllr McGuill asked whether all antisocial behaviour incidents with some evidence of arson involved that were attended by police were reported to the Fire and Rescue Service. It was confirmed that the Arson Reduction Team has a Police Sergeant working in the team and therefore a close working relationship has developed between the police and the Service.
- 8.10 In response to a question about working with partner agencies, it was confirmed that partner agencies that work with more vulnerable members of the community are able to share information with the Service in order for a home fire safety check to be undertaken at their premises. This demonstrates and highlights the importance of partnership working and the information sharing protocols that are now in place.

8.11 Members reiterated their support for prevention and awareness and felt that this work was an essential part of the Service and Authority's duties.

8.12 **RESOLVED to note the presentation and information provided.**

At this juncture, Cllr Paul Penlington left the meeting.

9 ANNUAL REPORT OF BAD DEBTS WRITTEN OFF

9.1 At the request of the Authority, the Treasurer submits an annual report by the 30<sup>th</sup> June following the end of the financial year listing all the debts written off and stating the reasons for write off.

9.2 **RESOLVED to note that, between 1<sup>st</sup> April 2012 and 31<sup>st</sup> March 2013, two bad debts had been written off, totalling £1,118.59.**

10 LOCAL GOVERNMENT PENSION SCHEME (LGPS) – DISCRETIONARY POLICY

10.1 The DCFO presented the report which informed Members of the requirement for the Authority to produce a LGPS Discretionary Policy Statement.

10.2 Members were asked to approve the resolutions decided for each regulation within the LGPS Discretionary Policy Statement; these had been established to ensure a balance between safeguarding public money and using discretion for compassion reasons based on good business sense. Members were also asked to agree that day-to-day decisions regarding discretions to be applied will be delegated to the Chief Fire Officer and Treasurer on behalf of the Authority.

10.3 It was noted that under the Local Government Pension Scheme (Benefits, Membership and Contributions Regulations 2008), each employing authority is required to formulate, publish and keep under review a policy statement in relation to the exercise of a number of discretions under the LGPS. All discretionary areas that require a formal resolution were included within the Policy Statement which applied to scheme members employed by North Wales Fire and Rescue Service.

10.4 **RESOLVED to approve each discretionary resolution within the LGPS Discretionary Policy Statement and to delegate day-to-day decisions to the Chief Fire Officer and Treasurer.**

11 COMPLAINTS AND LETTERS OF APPRECIATION

11.1 ACFO Claydon presented the report which informed Members about the number of complaints and letters of appreciation received from the public between 1<sup>st</sup> April 2012 - 31<sup>st</sup> March 2013.

- 11.2 It was noted that 123 letters, cards, e-mails, Twitter and Facebook messages were received during the year expressing appreciation and satisfaction with the Service. Correspondence of appreciation had been received about a variety of activities but the majority were in relation to the flooding of St Asaph and Ruthin and were received via Twitter and Facebook.
- 11.3 There had been a 29% decrease in the number of complaints received and a 16% decrease in the number of complaints that had been substantiated. ACFO Claydon also reported that the Service had undertaken 12,641 'Blue Light' journeys when responding to operational incidents between 1<sup>st</sup> April 2012 and March 31<sup>st</sup> 2013, and no driving complaints had been received during this reporting period.
- 11.4 **RESOLVED to note the number of complaints and expressions of appreciation received.**
- 12 WELSH GOVERNMENT'S "FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICES IN WALES 2013 PROJECT"
- 12.1 The Chief Fire Officer presented the report which advised Members of the existence of the Welsh Government's "Fire and Rescue Services in Wales 2013 Project" and asked for the Authority's support for involvement of North Wales Fire and Rescue Service officers in the associated working groups.
- 12.2 A letter had been sent to the three CFOs in Wales informing them of the project that would seek to collate and analyse information on the work of the services. There were three phases to the project, the first two phases would involve stakeholders but the third phase was a report to Ministers which did not involve stakeholders. It was unclear as to how, or if, the project would dovetail and link in to the work being undertaken by the Public Services Commission. Cllr A Jones commented that the project sounded similar to the work of the NIC and Members were concerned about the duplication of work that would be involved for officers. Further information will be provided to Members as the project progresses.
- 12.3 **RESOLVED to note the contents of the report and endorse the involvement of Service officers and other resources in the "Fire and Rescue Services in Wales 2013 Project".**
- 13 NATIONAL ISSUES COMMITTEE
- 13.1 The Chief Fire Officer gave Members an update about the work being undertaken under the direction of the National Issues Committee. The last meeting of the NIC had been held in March 2013.
- 13.2 There had already been a number of successes particularly in relation to the collaboration and various procedures within the Control function and also the procurement workstream. An all-Wales employment law contract had recently been jointly let between the three fire and rescue services, which had resulted in a cost reduction.

- 13.3 It was noted that efficiencies to date amounted to £2.6 million across the three services over a period of 5 years and that this figure was in addition to savings generated by each of the three FRAs through their individual budget setting processes. The NIC had agreed to adopt a framework for sustainability which would become the central organising principle in all NIC workstreams; it was anticipated that this would assist the achievement of a long term economic, social and environmental wellbeing for each FRS in Wales.
- 13.4 The Chair confirmed that the NIC was working well and that it demonstrated excellent collaboration between the three fire and rescue authorities.
- 13.5 **RESOLVED to note the information provided.**
- 14 REGIONAL SAFER COMMUNITIES BOARD
- 14.1 The Clerk presented the report which recommended that the Authority support the Regional Safer Communities Board in the development of a Regional Community Safety Plan.
- 14.2 Initial proposals for a North Wales Community Safety Plan had been agreed at the meeting of the Regional Safer Communities Board on 7<sup>th</sup> June 2013 and the Board was recommending to all its partner authorities and agencies that North Wales deliver and adopt a regional Community Safety Plan.
- 14.3 **RESOLVED to support and adopt the development of a Regional Community Safety Plan.**
- 15 PRISON IN NORTH WALES
- 15.1 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. The Executive Panel had considered this matter at its meeting and recommended that the Authority supported the proposal.
- 15.2 Cllr P Shotton supported the proposal and felt it was very important that North Wales had its own prison for economic reasons as well as enabling families to visit their loved ones regularly at a more local location.
- 15.3 **RESOLVED to endorse the Authority's support to the Regional Leadership Board's commitment to have a prison located in North Wales.**
- 16 MINUTES FOR INFORMATION
- 16.1 The minutes of the last Executive Panel meeting held on 13<sup>th</sup> May were submitted for information.
- 16.2 **RESOLVED to note the minutes for information.**



PART II - Pursuant to Section 100A (4) of the Local Government Act, 1972, the press and public were asked to leave the meeting during consideration of the following item(s) of business because it is likely that there would be disclosed to them exempt information as defined in Paragraph(s) 12 to 18 of Part 4 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972. Principal Officers, Head of Facilities, Members Liaison Officer and the Translator were asked to stay.

17 JOINT FIRE AND AMBULANCE STATION – WREXHAM

- 17.1 Members from Wrexham CBC were keen to declare a personal interest in the report although the Clerk had advised that unless a discussion ensued about any possible transaction of land there was no need for a personal or prejudicial interest to be declared. However, Members from Wrexham CBC felt that they were representing the people of Wrexham and therefore declared a personal interest.
- 17.2 The Chief Fire Officer presented the report which updated Members on the current situation regarding the joint fire and ambulance station in Wrexham. The report provided information about the “healthcheck” review of the project by an independent consultant and of a meeting held with the Minister for Local Government and Government Business, Lesley Griffiths AM. In addition, information was provided on continued work with officers of the Welsh Ambulance Service NHS Trust (WAST).
- 17.3 Following the resolution agreed at the March meeting, there had been several developments. The Wales Audit Office had refused to undertake the review and therefore an external auditor, with experience of doing similar reviews, had been appointed and he had produced a report in a very short space of time. A meeting between the Minister for Local Government and Government Business and the Minister for Health had taken place with clear instructions being given as to how they wanted to see the project move forward. Members were also given an update about the flooding, cost and affordability issues.
- 17.4 Members were given the opportunity to ask questions and officers clarified various issues before Cllr A Jones proposed that three of the four recommendations in the report be approved. Cllr A Jones was of the view that all Members should decide on the way forward and that this should not be delegated to the Executive Panel; this view was supported by other Members.
- 17.5 **RESOLVED to:**
- (i) note the response of the Minister for Local Government and Government Business at the meeting on the 24 May 2013;**
  - (ii) endorse the recommendations of the “health check” undertaken by JDH Business Services Ltd;**

- (iii) **recognise that irrespective of any response that the Minister may give and/or the further work proposed by JDH, the joint project cannot move to a satisfactory position without resolution of the flood mitigation issues referred to in paragraph 12 of the report;**
- (iv) **call an urgent meeting of the Authority should there be any major issues but that authority to deal with cost and specification issues can be delegated to the Chair, Chief Fire Officer, Clerk and Treasurer.**

At this juncture, many Members had to leave the meeting due to other commitments. All officers were excluded apart from those noted below. Therefore, present to discuss the last report were:

Councillors: M Ll Davies; P Lewis; J G Evans; J M Evans; H McGuill; D J Miles; W R Owen; R Parry; P Pemberton; R Skelland; A Tansley; W O Thomas.

Also present: Clerk, Treasurer, Members Liaison Officer and B Jones (Translator).

## 18 SENIOR SALARY REVIEW

- 18.1 The Clerk introduced the report which presented the outcomes of the independent review of senior pay within the fire and rescue service for the designated senior posts.
- 18.2 Under an agreement by the National Joint Council for Brigade Managers of Local Authority Fire and Rescue Services (NJC), a pay increase is negotiated annually to reflect inflation. It is also recommended that at regular intervals, each authority carries out a review of senior salaries. The purpose of the review is to ensure that senior salaries (1) have parity with salaries in comparable Fire and Rescue Authorities (2) are competitive and (3) reflect job complexity. It is good employment practice to maintain salary levels through periodic comparison and review.
- 18.3 The Total Reward Projects Ltd, an external assessor, was commissioned to undertake the review as it had previously undertaken the work in 2006 and 2009. The Authority's Remuneration Panel met twice to discuss the outcomes of the review, and minutes of both meetings were provided to Members.
- 18.4 Members discussed the report and recommendations and the Clerk and Treasurer provided advice as necessary.
- 18.5 **RESOLVED to endorse the recommendations made by the Remuneration Panel.**