

NORTH WALES FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY

Minutes of the meeting of North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority held on Monday 16 September 2013 at Siambr Dafydd Orwig, Gwynedd Council, Caernarfon. Meeting commenced at 10.45am.

PRESENT

Councillor

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

Representing

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

Also present:

S A Smith (Chief Fire Officer and Chief Executive); G Owens (Deputy 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

A I Dunbar
A Jones
D J Miles
M A Reece
W P Shotton
A Tansley

Representing

Flintshire County Council
Wrexham County Borough Council
Conwy County Borough Council
Flintshire County Council
Flintshire County Council
Conwy County Borough Council

1 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

1.1 There were no declarations of interest.

2 MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 17 JUNE 2013

2.1 The minutes of the Fire and Rescue Authority meeting held on 17 June 2013 were submitted for approval.

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

3 MATTERS ARISING

3.1 Welsh Government's Fire and Rescue Services in Wales 2013 Project – the Chief Fire Officer informed Members that a meeting of the working group had been held recently. The project was due to be completed by October 2013, however, there may be a delay due in part to the impending industrial action.

4 INDUSTRIAL DISPUTE

4.1 It was noted that the industrial dispute would be discussed in part II.

4.2 **RESOLVED to discuss the industrial dispute during part II of the agenda.**

5 CHAIR'S REPORT

5.1 The Chair and Deputy Chair's report listed meetings and events attended by Cllr M LI Davies and Cllr P R Lewis in their roles of Chair and Deputy Chair of North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority between June and September 2013.

5.2 The Chair reported that the meeting with the Public Services Commission had been positive. The three Chairs had emphasised the importance of maintaining the three fire and rescue authorities in Wales and highlighted the success of the prevention work being done in reducing the number of incidents across Wales.

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

6 IMPROVEMENT OBJECTIVES 2014-15 CONSULTATION

6.1 The Deputy Chief Fire Officer presented the report which asked Members to approve the contents of the draft Improvement Objectives 2014-15 Consultation document.

6.2 As the Authority is a Welsh improvement authority, it is required to make arrangements to secure continuous improvement and to set itself Improvement Objectives on an annual basis, having first consulted on those objectives with representatives of interested parties. The improvement plan must be published as soon as reasonably practicable after 31 December in the year before the year to which it relates.

- 6.3 The DCFO reported that Members of the Improvement Planning Working Group had considered a variety of information to aid their discussion in the development of improvement objectives and also considered the risks and the context in which NWFRS is working. It was noted that the success of the Authority is due to being consistent in what it wants to achieve and therefore some of the previous objectives have been refined with the main aim continuing to be to reduce accidental dwelling fire deaths. Members of the Working Group had also been mindful of the current financial climate and the consequences to service delivery if there were alterations to the budget. The final improvement objective is to look at rural fire cover and this will enable the Service to test and assess various different methods of providing fire cover in rural areas.
- 6.4 Cllr R E Parry asked why there was reference to a 'potential increase in demand' if fire incidents had reduced by 26%. The DCFO clarified that the potential increase was due to an ageing population with more people being cared for in their own homes which increased the risk of fire. The DCFO also explained that the Authority has memorandums of understanding established with a number of third sector organisations who undertake home fire safety checks at their clients' homes, and this enables contact with vulnerable members of the community who may not wish to engage with the Service directly.
- 6.5 **RESOLVED to approve the contents of the document 'Our plans for fire and rescue services in North Wales' for public consultation.**
- 7 STRATEGIC EQUALITY PLAN ANNUAL REPORT (REPORTING PERIOD 2012-2013)
- 7.1 The report was presented to seek Members' approval for the second Strategic Equality Plan Annual Report (Reporting Period 2012-2013) in response to the requirements of the Equality Act 2010 (Statutory Duties) (Wales) Regulations 2011.
- 7.2 ACFO Simmons explained that although the Authority had only published its first annual report in March 2013, it had been decided that it would be beneficial if the report was produced in the autumn of the reporting year, thereby giving departments who had equality objectives the opportunity to implement any changes required ready for the business planning process of the following year.
- 7.3 ACFO Simmons went on to explain that in terms of service delivery and especially since the work of the CFO Task Group was published in 2007, the Service has endeavoured to use intelligence-led information to identify those most at risk of fire. However, that approach does not necessarily reach the groups of people with protected characteristics under the Equality Act, therefore as part of its work next year the Service will need to identify those groups of people to ensure that their risk of fire is not greater than others, and this will be done through the use of focus groups and other methods.

- 7.4 Cllr McGuill asked whether hotspots for arson are targeted by the education team and the arson reduction team. It was confirmed that certain areas known to be at risk of arson are specifically targeted and that the Service and the police work closely on arson cases. However, Members were reminded that it is the police that have the main responsibility for dealing with arson as it is a criminal offence.
- 7.5 **RESOLVED to note the content of the report and approve the Strategic Equality Plan Annual Report 2012-2013 for publication on the Service's website.**
- 8 PROVISIONAL OUTTURN 2013-14
- 8.1 The Treasurer presented the report which provided Members with an estimated provisional outturn for the financial year 2013-2014 and information about the areas of overspend and underspend.
- 8.2 In response to the Deputy Chair's question about the transport budget line being estimated to be overspent by £98,000, it was noted that this had been anticipated and was due to the availability pilot project which aimed to increase availability at RDS stations. Wholetime firefighters were being invited to work additional hours covering at stations as and when necessary thus incurring travelling expenses to go from one station to another. Cllr Pemberton expressed concern about wholetime firefighters working at RDS stations and in particular that it would set an unwanted pattern of work for the future.
- 8.3 Cllr Skelland asked about the overspend on computer costs. ACFO Claydon explained that the new Fleetwave system is used by local authorities across North Wales which means increasing collaboration and will hopefully pay dividends in future despite the initial expense.
- 8.4 **RESOLVED to note the underspend of £497,770.**
- 9 STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS 2012-13
- 9.1 The Treasurer presented the report which requested delegated authority for the Audit Committee to approve the audited Statement of Accounts for 2012-13 and the Annual Governance Statement.
- 9.2 The Treasurer explained that due to subtle timing differences between holding this meeting and the meeting with the auditors and accountants to finalise the accounts, it had not been possible to submit the completed statement of accounts to this meeting. A detailed presentation of the accounts will be made to the Audit Committee on 23 September 2013 and those Members not on the Audit Committee were invited to attend the meeting should they require a detailed explanation of the accounts.
- 9.3 **RESOLVED to grant delegated authority, for this year, to the Audit Committee for approving the Statement of Accounts for 2012-13.**

10 DRAFT ASSESSMENT OF THE AUTHORITY'S PERFORMANCE IN 2012-13

- 10.1 The report was presented to seek Members' approval of the draft assessment of the Authority's Performance in 2012-13. The Authority is required to publish the information by 31st October in accordance with the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2009.
- 10.2 The report provided an assessment of how the Authority had discharged its general duty to improve and its progress against the improvement objectives it set itself for the previous year (2012-13). It also summarised the Authority's collaborations, and its performance against specified national and local performance indicators and measures of success. It was noted that before publication there may be minor updates to external data.
- 10.3 The DCFO reminded Members that they had received a comprehensive presentation on the draft performance data at the June Authority meeting. Since then the data had been finalised and the document provided a final overview of the Authority's assessment. Various actions had been undertaken so that the budget could be kept at a standstill over the three year period. The performance assessment document demonstrates the actions taken to achieve the savings and the DCFO confirmed that the provisional outturn report previously discussed showed that the Authority is on target to make the savings required by the end of year 3.
- 10.4 Cllr Skelland said that he was impressed with the reduction in fire incidents over the years within the North Wales area, but noted that the private rental sector was not mentioned specifically in the report and that he had concerns about the risk of fire in these properties. The CFO explained that the report did not distinguish between different forms of social housing. The CFO then went on to say that the CFO Task Group in 2007 had been clear about its findings on rented properties and that it was a risk factor but it had also been identified that some people were more at risk of a fire due to their own lifestyles rather than the housing conditions. The Chair suggested that Cllr Skelland contact his own council, as the licensing authority, to discuss any further issues.
- 10.5 Cllr McGuill asked whether the Service was involved in the planning stages of local authorities' new builds such as schools and hospitals. The CFO confirmed that through the planning and building control processes the Service is a statutory consultee and is involved in the early stages of such plans.
- 10.6 Cllr Lowe felt that the performance assessment was a positive report and thanked officers for their work. He felt the report clearly identified the aims and objectives, the improvements the Authority is working towards and considering the budget restrictions he considered the performance figures to be quite an achievement for the Authority.
- 10.7 **RESOLVED to approve the draft assessment of the Authority's Performance in 2012-13 for publication before the statutory deadline of 31 October 2013.**

Cllr L A W Jones left the meeting at this juncture.

11 COMMISSION ON PUBLIC SERVICE GOVERNANCE AND DELIVERY

- 11.1 The CFO presented the report which informed Members of the contents of the Authority's response to the Public Services Commission's call for evidence.
- 11.2 The Welsh Government's Programme for Government includes a series of reforms and reviews to strengthen the delivery of efficient, effective and accessible public services. In April 2013, the First Minister established the Commission on Public Service Governance and Delivery.
- 11.3 The CFO gave Members a brief synopsis of the meeting that the three Chief Fire Officers had had with the Commission. As previously reported by the Chair, Members of the Commission had been very interested in the work of the fire and rescue services in Wales, the approach to prevention and the work of the NIC.
- 11.4 **RESOLVED to note the update and the completed questionnaire submitted to the Commission.**

12 NATIONAL ISSUES COMMITTEE

- 12.1 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 July 2013.
- 12.2 The Wales Audit Office had undertaken a review of the NIC's work during its first year of existence and was pleased with its progress to date. The WAO had now suggested that the NIC should focus on a small number of projects that will deliver maximum savings. The Chair and Deputy Chair were also on the Committee and the Chair commented that excellent work was ongoing and officers were working hard, taking on NIC-related work in addition to their own existing workload.
- 12.3 It was noted that the efficiencies to date amount to £2.6million over a period of five years, and that this is in addition to the savings generated individually by each Fire and Rescue Service in Wales.
- 12.4 **RESOLVED to note the update.**

Cllr P W Owen left the meeting at this juncture.

13 REGIONAL SAFER COMMUNITIES BOARD

- 13.1 The Deputy Clerk gave an update about the work of the Safer Communities Board. From April 2014 there will be one regional community safety plan and this will be the first of its kind in Wales. As part of its work, the Board will continue its work with Housing Departments around reducing anti-social behaviour which may help with arson issues referred to earlier in the meeting.
- 13.3 **RESOLVED to note the update.**

14 MINUTES FOR INFORMATION

14.1 The minutes of the following meetings were submitted for information:

- Audit Committee meeting held on 3 June 2013
- Executive Panel meeting held on 15 July 2013.

14.2 **RESOLVED to note the minutes for information.**

Cllr R Davies left the meeting at this juncture.

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.

15 INDUSTRIAL DISPUTE

15.1 The CFO gave Members a comprehensive update about the industrial dispute between the FBU and Government ministers over pension issues. The FBU had balloted its members and the result was published on 29th August with the result being significantly in favour of taking strike action.

15.2 The CFO informed Members that North Wales Fire and Rescue Service has robust contingency plans in the event of withdrawal of labour which were now well advanced and would be ready for implementation when the dates of strike action were announced. It was noted that the Service will not be undertaking non-statutory work during any strike action. The CFO confirmed that he will continue to keep Members informed of developments.

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

16 JOINT FIRE AND AMBULANCE STATION – WREXHAM

16.1 The report updated Members on the current situation regarding the joint fire and ambulance station in Wrexham. In addition, Members were provided with:

- a cost options appraisal provided by the independent consultant (JDH Business Services Ltd) who undertook the "health check" review of the project;
- cost benefit analysis comparing the cost of continuing with the combined project against the option of rebuilding on Bradley Road;
- proposed plan showing the layout.

- 16.2 ACFO Claydon informed Members of the work that had taken place since the last Authority meeting. The Minister for Local Government and Government Business had met with the Minister for Health and Social Services who had then commissioned NHS Wales Shared Services Partnership – Facilities Services (NWSSP-FS) to independently review the project and the technical plans. The review had been instrumental to the whole project and had enabled several issues to be addressed and resolved. As a result, the benefit analysis had reaffirmed the value of having a joint site and the relocation of the training facility has mitigated the flooding concerns.
- 16.3 Cllr Pemberton thanked officers for all their work in progressing the project. Cllr Lowe reiterated the comments and congratulated officers for their patience and professionalism and he was also pleased to note the involvement of the Minister for Local Government and Government Business.
- 16.4 **RESOLVED to**
- (i) note the contents of the report and the appendices;**
 - (ii) reinstate the work programme on the joint project with WAST at Croesnewydd Road.**