

NORTH WALES FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY

Minutes of the meeting of North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority held on Monday 18 March 2019 at Conwy County Borough Council Chamber, Bodlondeb, Conwy. Meeting commenced at 10.30am.

PRESENT

Councillor

M Ll Davies (Chair)
P Lewis (Deputy Chair)
B Apsley
A Davies
M Dixon
I Dunbar
V Gay
S Glyn
J B Hughes
D Rees
G A Roberts
P Shotton
O Thomas
G Williams

Representing

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

Also present:

S A Smith (Chief Fire Officer and Chief Executive); K W Finch (Treasurer to the Authority); G Owens (Deputy Clerk and Monitoring Officer to the Authority); R Fairhead and K Roberts (Assistant Chief Fire Officers); S Morris and H MacArthur (Assistant Chief Officers); T Williams (Corporate Communications Manager); P Hardwick (Corporate Planning Manager); G Williams (Accountant, Treasurer's Department, Conwy County Borough Council); A Hughes (Audit Manager, Wales Audit Office)

APOLOGIES

Councillor

M Bateman
B Blakeley
R Griffiths
E W Jones
S Lloyd-Williams
R Parry
R Roberts
N Smith
A Tansley
D Wisinger

Representing

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

1 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

- 1.1 In relation to agenda item 14 (appointment of Monitoring Officer/Clerk), the Deputy Clerk declared an interest and confirmed that Members from Flintshire County Council were not required to do so.
- 1.2 In relation to agenda item 13 (Pay Policy Statement 2019/20) the Treasurer recorded a general declaration of interest by officers but advised that their attendance during consideration of this item would not be prejudicial.

2 MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 17 DECEMBER 2018

- 2.1 The minutes of the FRA meeting held on 17 December 2018 were submitted for approval.
- 2.2 **RESOLVED to approve the minutes of the meeting as a true and correct record.**

3 MATTERS ARISING

- 3.1 In response to a question regarding paragraph 9.4 (ii) of the minutes, the CFO confirmed that the Chair and Deputy Chair of the Audit Committee had been invited to the Planning Working Group meetings.
- 3.2 The CFO referred to paragraph 8.2 of the minutes and advised that confirmation had been received that for 2019/20 the Welsh Government would meet the anticipated additional pension costs arising from the GAD valuation.
- 3.3 The CFO also confirmed that in respect of paragraph 8.4 (ii), it had not been necessary to use the delegated powers as the 2018/19 budget remained as approved by Members at the December 2018 meeting.

4 URGENT MATTERS

- 4.1 There were no urgent matters.

5 CHAIR'S REPORT

5.1 The report listed meetings and events attended by Cllr M Ll Davies and Cllr P R Lewis in their roles of Chair and Deputy Chair of North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority between January and March 2019.

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

6.0 RE-APPROVAL OF THE STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS 2017/18

6.1 The Treasurer introduced the report which presented, for Members' re-approval, the audited statement of accounts for 2017/18, including the governance statement.

6.2 The FRA had already approved the audited accounts and governance statement for 2017/18 at its meeting of 17 September 2018, but the Wales Audit Office had been unable to formally issue the audit certificate at that time because of an outstanding matter relating to the application of the Firefighters' Pension Scheme Regulations.

6.3 Members were informed that the matter had now been satisfactorily resolved, and that they were therefore required to re-approve the audited accounts and letter of representation.

6.4 **RESOLVED TO:**

- (i) re-approve the statement of accounts and annual governance statement for 2017/18;**
- (ii) re-approve the letter of representation;**
- (iii) note the Audit Report produced by the Auditor General for Wales;**
- (iv) note the Annual Audit Letter for 2017/18 produced by the Auditor General for Wales.**

7.0 AUDIT PLAN 2019

7.1 ACO MacArthur presented the 2019 Audit Plan which set out the Wales Audit Office's proposed work and associated fees for the coming year.

7.2 **RESOLVED to note the Audit Plan 2019.**

- 8.0 DRAFT IMPROVEMENT AND WELL-BEING PLAN 2019/20
- 8.1 ACO Morris presented the draft Improvement and Well-being Plan 2019/20 that will need to be published by 31 March 2019 in accordance with legislation.
- 8.2 Cllr Lewis re-iterated his appreciation of the draft Plan and congratulated the author on producing an easy to follow document.
- 8.3 **RESOLVED to approve the draft Improvement and Well-being Plan 2019/20 for publication on the Authority's website before the end of March 2019.**
- 9.0 PROVISIONAL OUTTURN 2018/19
- 9.1 The Treasurer presented the report which provided Members with an estimated provisional outturn for the financial year 2018/19.
- 9.2 Members noted that the current indications are that in 2018/19 the Authority will fully utilise its revenue budget of £34.1m and all grant allocations, but that its capital expenditure will be £2.4m against a plan of £5.9m, reflecting the fact that a number of projects have been re-profiled into future years as part of the Authority's long term strategy.
- 9.3 **RESOLVED to note the financial position of the Authority.**
- 10 CAPITAL STRATEGY AND TREASURY MANAGEMENT
- 10.1 The Treasurer presented the report to Members outlining how capital expenditure, capital financing and treasury management activity contribute to the provision of a fire and rescue service, and giving an overview of how associated risk is managed and the implications for future financial sustainability.
- 10.2 The report had been presented to the Audit Committee on the 28 January 2019 in order for its members to review the contents before submission to the FRA. Following a presentation highlighting the key areas of the report, Members of the Audit Committee recommended the report for approval by the FRA.

- 10.3 **RESOLVED to approve each of the five key elements noted in the report as set out below:**
- (i) the overall Capital Strategy**
 - (ii) the Prudential Indicators;**
 - (iii) the Treasury Management Strategy for 2019/20;**
 - (iv) the Investment Strategy;**
 - (v) the Minimum Revenue Provision Policy.**

11 FINANCE AND GOVERNANCE ARRANGEMENTS FOR FRAs IN WALES

- 11.1 The CFO presented the report updating Members on the Welsh Government's proposals to change the finance and governance arrangements for FRAs in Wales as set out in the White Paper "Reform of Fire and Rescue Authorities in Wales", published on 13 November 2018.
- 11.2 The Authority's response to the WG's consultation on the White Paper had been submitted by the 5 February 2019 deadline.
- 11.3 The Chair and the CFO also updated Members on a meeting that they had attended on 20 February 2019 when the Deputy Minister for Housing and Local Government and Welsh Government officials had provided feedback to the Chairs and CFOs of the three FRAs and representatives from the WLGA on the response that had been received to the White Paper. It had been reported that an unusually high number of responses had been received, and that it would take time for the WG to analyse these before making a formal response.
- 11.4 **RESOLVED to note the report and receive a further report once the Welsh Government has published its response to the consultation responses submitted to the White Paper "Reform of Fire and Rescue Authorities in Wales".**

12 PAY POLICY STATEMENT 2019/20

- 12.1 The Treasurer presented the report which sought Members' approval for the pay policy statement for 2019/20.
- 12.2 It was noted that the Authority is required to produce a pay policy statement on an annual basis under Section 38(1) of the Localism Act 2011. The statement must also comply with the Welsh Government guidance "Pay Accountability in Local Government in Wales" issued in May 2017.
- 12.3 Clarification was received from the Treasurer and Deputy Clerk that the distribution of the spinal column points within the non-operational pay scale was consistent with the recommendations in the Hutton report on fair pay in the public sector.

12.4 **RESOLVED to approve the pay policy statement for the coming financial year 2019/20.**

13 FIREFIGHTERS' PAY

13.1 The CFO provided an update on negotiations that were taking place through the National Joint Council for Local Authority Fire and Rescue Services regarding firefighters' pay and conditions.

At this juncture, Cllr D Rees and Cllr S Glyn left the meeting.

The Deputy Clerk and Monitoring Officer left the meeting whilst the following agenda item was discussed.

14 APPOINTMENT OF MONITORING OFFICER/CLERK

14.1 The Chief Fire Officer presented a report informing Members of the outcome of the competitive procurement process for the provision of a Monitoring Officer/Clerk to North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority from 1 April 2019 and to seek approval for the appointment of Colin Everett, Flintshire County Council, to the role.

14.2 **RESOLVED to note the completion of the competitive procurement process and to approve the appointment of Colin Everett, Flintshire County Council, to the role of Monitoring Officer/Clerk to North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority from 1 April 2019.**

The Deputy Clerk and Monitoring Officer returned to the meeting.

15 STANDARDS COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT

15.1 The Deputy Clerk presented the report which asked Members to approve the Standards Committee's fourteenth annual report.

- 15.2 Reference was made to poor attendance levels at some meetings. Members were reminded of the need to attend regularly and that dates of meetings are set well in advance which should help avoid diary clashes. The Chair thanked those members who are able to provide regular attendance.
- 15.3 The Chair also extended thanks to Mr. David Morris, whose term of office had ended in 2018, for his work and commitment to the Standards Committee.
- 15.4 **RESOLVED to approve the Standards Committee's annual report.**

At this juncture, Cllr A Davies left the meeting.

- 16 PREPARATION FOR THE UK'S WITHDRAWAL FROM THE EUROPEAN UNION (BREXIT)
- 16.1 ACFO Fairhead presented a report informing Members of actions being taken by North Wales Fire and Rescue Service to prepare for the UK's withdrawal from the European Union.
- 16.2 ACFO Fairhead outlined the work being undertaken by the Service to identify and plan for situations that could potentially arise from Brexit. Work included checking suppliers' continuity plans, and preparing for possible traffic congestion around Holyhead port. Members were also informed that planning continues through the Local Resilience Forum to ensure that risks and appropriate responses are identified collectively.
- 16.3 **RESOLVED to note the information provided.**