

**NORTH WALES FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY**

These are the minutes of the Executive Panel meeting of the North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority held on Monday 25<sup>th</sup> April 2005 at Fire and Rescue Service Headquarters, Rhyl. Meeting commenced at 12.20pm.

**Present:**

**Councillor**

T Roberts (Chairman)  
M Williams (Vice-Chairman)

S C Jones  
J A Smith  
D Barratt  
E F Evans  
E Morgan Jones  
W T Owen  
G M Craddock  
E C George

**Representing**

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

**Also present:**

S A Smith (Chief Fire Officer and Chief Executive); I R Miller (Clerk and Monitoring Officer to the Authority); S Forrest (Treasurer's Department Conwy County Borough Council); C Enness (Deputy Chief Fire Officer); C Hanks (Assistant Chief Fire Officer, Service Support); P S Claydon (Assistant Chief Fire Officer, Service Delivery); P L Slee (Assistant Chief Officer, Corporate Services); S Morris (Corporate Planning Manager) and Rh Evans (Member Liaison Officer).

**PART I**

**1) Apologies**

**Councillor**

J M Vaughan  
D Jones MBE  
W J Chorlton

K W Finch

**Representing**

Conwy County Borough Council  
Denbighshire County Council  
Ynys Môn County Council

Treasurer to the Authority

Members were welcomed to the meeting by the Chairman.

## 2) Notice of Urgent Matters

The Chairman advised that no items had been submitted to either the Clerk or him for consideration.

## 3) Minutes

The following minutes were submitted:

- i. Executive Panel meeting held on 31<sup>st</sup> January 2005
- ii. Extraordinary Executive Panel meeting held on 7<sup>th</sup> March 2005

**Resolved: - to approve the minutes as a true and correct record of proceedings**

## 4) Matters Arising

**Executive Panel Meeting, 31<sup>st</sup> January 2005 – Business Item 14, Grievance, Discipline and Capability Procedures:** The Clerk advised that, as the Authority had amended the Executive Panel's Terms of Reference to reflect the changes in the Panel's responsibilities following the adoption of the new Grievance, Discipline and Capability Procedures, the Scheme of Delegations to the Chief Fire Officer would also require to be amended in order to incorporate the Chief Fire Officer's revised duties under the new procedures into the Scheme. It was:

**Resolved: - that the Clerk draft a report, for submission to the Fire and Rescue Authority meeting in June 2005, on the amendments required to the Scheme of Delegations to the Chief Fire Officer in order to reflect the changes in responsibilities following the Authority's adoption of the Grievance, Discipline and Capability Procedures**

**Extraordinary Executive Panel Meeting, 7<sup>th</sup> March 2005:** Councillor E C George enquired whether any responses had been received following the Panel's decision to lobby AMs prior to the Assembly's plenary debate on the Fire and Rescue National Framework for Wales. The Clerk confirmed that, following the meeting, a letter had been sent to all AMs reiterating the Authority's concerns on a number of issues contained in the Framework document; this letter had been copied to all Executive Panel members. One of the points listed in the Authority's letter had been raised by an AM during the plenary debate. Other points relating to the drafting of the document had been addressed by Assembly officials prior to its submission to the plenary session. At the close of the debate the Framework had received the Assembly's approval. Fire and rescue authorities in Wales were now required to give regard to the Framework when setting priorities, implementing policies and executing their functions. Copies of the final published version of the Framework were still awaited.

The Panel was informed by the Chairman that a meeting of the Wales Fire Services' Forum had now been arranged for the 18<sup>th</sup> May 2005. Amongst the items submitted for discussion was the future membership arrangements for the

Forum. The Chairman also advised that, dependent on the outcome of the Forum's meeting, he may need to call an extraordinary meeting of the Executive Panel to discuss the way forward.

## **5) Future Arrangements for handling Best Value**

The Clerk introduced his report (previously circulated) which asked the Panel to consider a recommendation from the Authority's Best Value Committee that its responsibilities under the Local Government Act 1999 be transferred to the Executive Panel. He proceeded to explain that the Best Value Committee, at its meeting on the 10<sup>th</sup> March 2005, had taken this decision in the light of recent legislative changes and the introduction of the Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP) process. The Clerk pointed out that if the Executive Panel agreed to the recommendation, which would require the Fire and Rescue Authority's ratification, it would necessitate amendments to the Panel's Terms of Reference. Councillor E C George was of the view that the recommendation represented the most logical approach for the Authority to adopt. The Panel:

***Resolved: - to recommend to the Fire and Rescue Authority that the Best Value Committee be wound up and that the Executive Panel's terms of reference should be amended accordingly***

## **6) Review of Legislation on Members' Allowances**

The Clerk introduced his report (previously circulated) which sought members agreement on a response to the Welsh Assembly Government's Minister for Finance, Local Government and Public Services' consultation letter, dated 9<sup>th</sup> February 2005, on the *Review of Councillors' Allowances Regulations*. Copies of the Minister's letter containing the Assembly Government's proposals, along with a draft response on the Authority's behalf, were annexed to the report for members' consideration. The Clerk explained that the regulations governing the payment of allowances to members of fire and rescue authorities did not actually refer to Special Responsibility Allowances (SRAs) but rather defined the allowances as Fire Authority Chairperson and Vice-Chairperson's Allowances. Despite this the Minister nevertheless seemed minded to prohibit a councillor who was a portfolio holder, or a chair of a committee, on his or her own council and who was also an office holder on a fire and rescue authority from receiving two allowances in recognition of the extra workload and commitment entailed by both roles. Members were reminded by the Clerk that the Minister had attempted, during the drafting stage of the Regulations, to prohibit the payment of allowances for additional responsibilities to fire and rescue authority office holders who also held offices within their own councils. But, due to an effective lobby from North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority and the other Welsh fire and rescue authorities, this proposal had been removed from the Regulations prior to their approval. The Clerk then explained in detail each point listed in his report and the draft response. He concluded by saying that, although the Minister had not raised the issue in her letter, he was of the view that it would be opportune for the Authority in its response to reiterate its position on the need to bring

forward legislation that would include fire authority allowances within the sphere of pensionable allowances.

Councillor E C George said that he understood the Minister's reasoning for restricting the payments of SRAs to councillors who assumed more than one additional role within their own local council, but felt that councillors who served on outside bodies and undertook additional roles on those bodies should not be penalised by being prohibited from receiving allowances for the additional responsibilities. He also requested that the point in the letter requesting that fire authority allowances be made pensionable should stipulate that, if and when this was granted, the administration of the pension scheme should be undertaken by authorities that administered local government pension funds rather than by fire and rescue authorities. It was:

***Resolved: - to agree, on the Fire and Rescue Authority's behalf, the response in Annex 1 to the report as drafted pending the inclusion in the final paragraph that, if and when the fire authority allowances became pensionable, the administration of the pension scheme be dealt with by the constituent authorities' pension schemes, and that the letter be sent to the Welsh Assembly Government's Minister for Finance, Local Government and Public Services prior to the 5<sup>th</sup> May 2005 deadline for responses***

#### **7) Update on Capital Projects**

The Chief Fire Officer introduced his report (previously circulated) updating members on the Property Department's capital programme. Members were advised by the Clerk that the attachment to the report came under Part II business, therefore the press and public would have to be excluded before any discussion could take place on detailed issues arising from it. Assistant Chief Fire Officer Colin Hanks then detailed each item listed in the report and invited members' questions. Members were informed that work on the new Headquarters building was on schedule and it was anticipated that staff would begin to move in to the building during the week commencing 6<sup>th</sup> June 2005. A welcome was extended to Panel members, by prior arrangement, to visit the new Headquarters building. Councillor E C George suggested that it may be advisable to arrange a visit to the Headquarters site for all Fire and Rescue Authority members immediately following the Authority's meeting on 20<sup>th</sup> June 2005. It was:

***Resolved: - to note the contents of the report and that a visit to the Service's new Headquarters be arranged for all Fire and Rescue Authority members immediately following the Authority's meeting on 20<sup>th</sup> June 2005***

#### **8) Tender for remodelling work at Llanrwst Fire Station**

The Chief Fire Officer introduced his report (previously circulated) which sought members' approval to accept a tender for the erection of an extension and remodelling work at Llanrwst Fire Station. Assistant Chief Fire Officer Hanks

explained that, in accordance with the Authority's Contract Standing Orders, as the lowest tender submitted to specification exceeded the budget provision by more than 10% the Chief Fire Officer was required to seek the Authority's permission before he could accept the tender. He proceeded to explain that the main factors which had contributed to the variance from the original budget provision had been the need to provide women's amenities and the requirement to comply with the 1995 Disability Discrimination Act. Assistant Chief Fire Officer Hanks assured members that the additional costs of the project could be met from savings realised on other projects within the capital programme. Councillor S C Jones noted her concern that the additional requirements had not been built in to the original capital programme prior to the commencement of the tendering process. It was:

**Resolved: - to authorise the Chief Fire Officer to accept the tender for the work required at Llanrwst Fire Station for the amount of £141,647.67**

#### **9) Remodelling of Training House at Rhyl Fire Station**

The Chief Fire Officer introduced his report (previously circulated) informing members of the tender accepted for the remodelling of the training house at Rhyl Fire Station. He advised members that all the details were contained in his report and that the accepted tender was within the budget allocation. It was therefore:

**Resolved: - to note the decision of the Chief Fire Officer in consultation with the Chairman in accepting the tender for remodelling the training house at Rhyl for the amount of £56,539**

#### **10) Extensions of Sick Pay**

The Chief Fire Officer introduced his report (previously circulated) informing members of the decisions taken by him following consultation with the Chairman in respect of the granting of extensions of sick pay. He explained that the report had been drafted in such a way as to protect the identity of the individuals concerned. Members:

**Resolved: -to note the report**

#### **11) Urgent Matters**

None.

#### **12) Date(s) of future meetings**

Following a discussion it was:

**Resolved: - to hold the next meeting of the Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP) Working Group and the Executive Panel on Monday 25<sup>th</sup> July 2005. The**

***IRMP Working Group to meet at 10.30am followed by a meeting of the Executive Panel at 12 noon; both meetings to be held at the Fire and Rescue Service's new Headquarters at St. Asaph.***

**PART II**

No business.

Meeting concluded at 12.45pm.

**The above minutes, pending any inclusions shown, are approved as a true and correct record of proceedings.**

**Signed:** T Roberts

**Dated:** 25 July, 2005