

NORTH WALES FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY

Minutes of the meeting of North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority held on Monday 18 June 2018 at Conwy County Borough Council Chamber, Bodlondeb, Conwy. Meeting commenced at 11.15am.

PRESENT

Councillor

M LI Davies (Chair)
P Lewis (Deputy Chair)
B Apsley
B Blakeley
M Bateman
A Daniels
A Davies
I Dunbar
P Evans
V Gay
S Glyn
R Griffiths
E Jones
S Lloyd-Williams
G Lowe
R Parry
D Rees
P Shotton
J R Skelland
N Smith
A Tansley
O Thomas
G Williams
D Wisinger

Representing

Denbighshire County Council
Conwy County Borough Council
Wrexham County Borough Council
Denbighshire County Council
Flintshire County Council
Gwynedd Council
Denbighshire County Council
Flintshire County Council
Denbighshire County Council
Flintshire County Council
Gwynedd Council
Anglesey County Council
Anglesey County Council
Conwy County Borough Council
Wrexham County Borough Council
Conwy County Borough Council
Anglesey County Council
Flintshire County Council
Wrexham County Borough Council
Conwy County Borough Council
Conwy County Borough Council
Flintshire County Council
Gwynedd 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); R Fairhead (Assistant Chief Fire Officer); S Morris and H MacArthur (Assistant Chief Officers); T Williams (Corporate Communications Manager); S Forrest (Accountant, Treasurer's Department, Conwy County Borough Council); A Davies (Member Liaison Officer).

APOLOGIES

Councillor

M Dixon
J B Hughes
I D Lloyd
R Roberts

Representing

Wrexham County Borough Council
Gwynedd Council
Gwynedd Council
Wrexham County Borough Council

1 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

1.1 There were no declarations of interest.

2 MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 19 MARCH 2018

2.1 The minutes of the Fire and Rescue Authority meeting held on 19 March were submitted for approval.

2.2 **RESOLVED to approve minutes of the meeting as a true and correct record.**

3 MATTERS ARISING

3.1 Community Assistance Team - As agreed at the last meeting, the CFO had written to the Cabinet Secretary expressing members' disappointment that there was no funding available to continue with the Community Assistance Team. The team had now been disbanded and the valuable work undertaken by the team has now ceased.

3.2 Members were extremely disappointed and concerned that no funding had been forthcoming from Welsh Government for this excellent service. The CFO confirmed that evidence and statistics demonstrated its success, however, the team had been established using external funding and it was a long standing agreement that the Authority would cease the activity if the external funding ceased.

3.3 Members wished to place on record their thanks to the staff who had been a part of the CAT and to the officers who had tried to obtain funding to continue with the work.

3.4 **RESOLVED to note the update.**

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 March and June 2018.

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

- 6 IMPROVEMENT AND WELL-BEING PLAN 2019/20
- 6.1 Cllr P R Lewis presented the report on behalf of the Executive Panel members. The report detailed the Executive Panel's recommendation for the next phase of developing the Fire and Rescue Authority (FRA)'s Improvement and Well-being Plan 2019/20, and asked members to agree the basis of the FRA's stakeholder and public consultation over the summer 2018.
- 6.2 Cllr Lewis informed members about the background work that has been undertaken by members of the Planning Working Group. Over the five meetings held, the extensive information provided by officers had enabled members to identify potential options for public consultation on how to fund the deficit of £1.9million that is facing the Authority in 2019/20.
- 6.3 ACO Morris reminded members of the Gunning principles, specifically of consulting appropriately and conscientiously in accordance with the principles so as to reduce the risk of a legal challenge to either the consultation exercise itself or to any subsequent decision.
- 6.4 Members discussed the report at length and looked at the various options that had been considered and rejected by the Executive Panel. It was noted that although some of those options would have produced the savings required, members had been concerned about the effect they would have on the overall level of fire and rescue services in North Wales.
- 6.5 Options a) and b) were recommended for consultation. Whereas option a) involved increasing local authorities' contribution to fund the whole deficit amount, option b) stated that the Authority could increase contributions from local authorities by slightly less than the full amount of the deficit and make efficiency savings internally to bridge the gap. However, these savings could be made without affecting the services to the public.
- 6.6 All members felt it was important to include as much background information as possible in the consultation document, in order to ensure that the public fully understand the seriousness of the situation and also that they understand that an increase in local authority contribution may mean an increase in their council tax bill.
- 6.7 **RESOLVED that NWFRA consults publicly over the summer 2018 on a financial strategy based on the following two options:**

a) increasing the combined total contribution from the local authorities by an estimated £1,893,000 in 2019/20 and so retaining current levels of fire and rescue services; OR

b) increasing the combined total contribution from the local authorities by slightly less than £1,893,000 in 2019/20 and so retaining the main fire and rescue services in North Wales but requiring some savings to be made.

Voting details: 22 in favour and 2 abstentions.

7 GOVERNANCE AND FINANCE ARRANGEMENTS FOR FRAs IN WALES

7.1 The CFO presented the report which updated members on the latest position in respect of proposed changes to the finance and governance arrangements of fire and rescue authorities (FRAs) in Wales.

7.2 The report referred to an offer by the Cabinet Secretary for FRA representatives to meet with two independent academics, with particular specialisms in governance; the meeting for North Wales was held on 4 June and a report containing feedback from all three FRAs will be submitted to the Cabinet Secretary in due course. The Chairs will be meeting with the Cabinet Secretary in July.

7.3 **RESOLVED to note the information.**

8 FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE 2017/18

8.1 The Treasurer presented the report which provided members with the draft unaudited financial performance of the Authority for 2017/18 and the financial position as at 31 March 2018. Members were also asked to approve the carry forward of earmarked reserves as detailed in the report.

8.2 The report had been presented to the Audit Committee on the 4 June 2018 in order for members to review the content prior to submission to the Fire and Rescue Authority. Following a presentation highlighting the key areas of the report Members of the Audit Committee had recommended the report for approval by the Fire and Rescue Authority.

8.3 It was noted that the rollover of earmarked reserves was in relation to the following projects:

- New national contract for radio communication – £300k ongoing project and considered prudent to set aside money to cover any additional costs that may be incurred due to delayed timescales at a national level.
- The WG has reduced the community safety grant by 50% £194k therefore considered prudent to carry over this reserve to fund future expenditure.

8.4 **RESOLVED to**

- (i) note the financial position and performance of the Authority; and**
- (ii) approve the carry forward of the earmarked reserves as detailed above.**

9 TREASURY MANAGEMENT ACTIVITY AND ACTUAL PRUDENTIAL INDICATORS FOR 2017/18

9.1 The Treasurer presented the annual treasury report which is a requirement of the Authority's reporting procedures; it details the treasury activity and the actual prudential indicators for 2017/18 in accordance with the requirements of the Prudential Code.

9.2 It was noted that members of the Audit Committee, at its meeting on 4 June 2018, had reviewed the contents in detail and had no major observations nor could find any major risks in the report and would recommend it be approved by the Authority.

9.3 **RESOLVED to approve the actual prudential indicators set out in appendix A of the report.**

10 2017/18 PROVISIONAL UNAUDITED PERFORMANCE KEY POINTS

10.1 ACO Morris delivered a presentation on the provisional unaudited performance figures for 2017/18. 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 2018.

10.2 The draft performance figures were noted. Following the introduction of a new graph which showed that an increased number of safe and well checks means a decrease in the number of accidental fire dwellings and vice versa, it is evident that the Service's prevention work is proving to be effective.

10.3 **RESOLVED to note the information provided in the presentation.**

11 ANNUAL REPORT OF BAD DEBTS WRITTEN OFF

11.1 The Treasurer presented the report which informed members that the total bad debts written off between 1 April 2017 and 31 March 2018 was £196.60.

11.2 **RESOLVED to note the contents of the report.**

12 FIREFIGHTERS' PENSION SCHEMES DISCRETIONARY POLICY STATEMENT

12.1 ACO MacArthur presented the report which informed members of the requirement for the Authority to produce a firefighters' pension discretionary policy statement. The report also sought approval of the resolutions within the firefighters' pension scheme discretionary policy statement and to seek approval that, on behalf of the Fire and Rescue Authority, decisions will be delegated on a day-to-day basis to the Chief Fire Officer and Treasurer.

12.2 The Authority is required under the Firefighters' Pension Scheme regulations to make decisions on matters relating to the administration of the Schemes. The Authority is required to review and where necessary publish a discretions policy detailing whether discretion will be applied or otherwise.

12.3 **RESOLVED to approve each discretionary resolution within the Firefighters' Pension Scheme Discretionary Policy Statement and to delegate day-to-day decisions to the Chief Fire Officer and Treasurer.**

13 COMPLAINTS AND EXPRESSIONS OF APPRECIATION

13.1 ACFO Fairhead presented the report which informed members of the numbers and types of complaints and expressions of appreciation received by the Service between 1 April 2017 and 31 March 2018, as well as the numbers of complaints resolved during that same period.

13.2 During the year 2017/18, a total of 31 complaints were received, 13 of which were substantiated. All complaints had been investigated, dealt with informally and the complainant in each case had been satisfied with the outcome. It was pleasing to note that 115 messages of appreciation had been received.

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

14 MEMBERS' REMUNERATION SCHEME

14.1 The Clerk presented the annual report of the Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales (IRPW) which set out changes to members' remuneration which will come into effect on the date of the annual meeting on 18 June 2018.

14.2 **RESOLVED to:**

- (i) **note the IRPW's determinations in relation to members' allowances and remuneration, for implementation as of 18 June 2018;**
- (ii) **agree that subsistence can be claimed when members are away from home for five hours or more in line with HMRC rules;**
- (iii) **give delegated authority to the Clerk to update the schedule of member remuneration within the Authority's constitution and to make any necessary amendments to the 2018/19 schedule from time to time during the municipal year, in order to reflect any changes in membership of the Authority, or as a result of any supplementary reports issued by the IRPW.**

15 MINUTES OF MEETINGS

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

- Audit Committee meeting held on 29 January 2018
- Executive Panel meeting held on 12 February 2018.

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