

**NORTH WALES FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY
EXECUTIVE PANEL**

Minutes of the Executive Panel Meeting of the North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority held on 21st November 2011 at Fire and Rescue Headquarters, St Asaph. Meeting commenced at 2pm.

PRESENT

Cllr S Frobisher (Chair)	Denbighshire County Council
Cllr A M Jones	Anglesey County Council
Cllr B Dunn	Flintshire County Council
Cllr L W Davies	Anglesey County Council
Cllr M LI Davies	Denbighshire County Council
Cllr P Jeffares	Wrexham County Borough Council
Cllr J V Owen	Anglesey County Council
Cllr T Roberts	Gwynedd Council
Cllr J R Skelland	Wrexham County Borough Council
Cllr M Thomas	Conwy County Borough Council

ALSO PRESENT:

S A Smith (Chief Fire Officer and Chief Executive); A Jones (Monitoring Officer); K Finch (Treasurer); D Docx (Deputy Chief Fire Officer); P Claydon, C Hanks and R Simmons (Assistant Chief Fire Officers); G Brandrick (Senior Operations Manager); G W Griffiths (Senior Fire Safety Manager); S Roberts (Head of ICT); T Williams (Corporate Communications Manager); S Teal-Bromley (Executive Support Manager); C Dingle (Finance Manager); A Davies (Member Liaison Officer); A Morris and J Evans (Wales Audit Office); L Bryan (Facilities Department).

Apologies:

Cllr G C Evans	Denbighshire County Council
Cllr G James	Flintshire County Council
Cllr W P Roberts	Conwy County Borough Council

1 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

1.1 None.

2 MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 19TH SEPTEMBER 2011

2.1 The minutes of the meeting held on 19th September were approved as a correct record.

3 MATTERS ARISING

3.1 MIRG - the Chief Fire Officer advised Members that he had written to the Head of Maritime Coastal Agency expressing the Authority's concern about the withdrawal of MIRG provision. A reply had been received from the Director of MCA stating that the letter had been noted.

4 PROGRESS TOWARDS BUDGET SAVINGS 2011-2014

- 4.1 The Deputy Chief Fire Officer introduced the report which formed part of the regular reporting mechanism about the progress towards achieving the required savings of £2.4 million over three years.
- 4.2 The Authority was on target to save the agreed £800,000 in the first year. Members had been kept informed of the officer cover review and the subsequent restructure which had resulted in a £450,000 saving. Other savings had been achieved by reducing the community safety budget, removing discretionary budget lines, minimising attendances at conferences, changing the way non-operational learning was provided, not funding the annual YFA event and combining the Long Service and Awards Ceremonies.
- 4.3 The Deputy Chief Fire Officer explained that reducing the community safety budget by £50,000 had caused a delay in the transfer of the bulk of the HFSCs work from firefighters to specialist practitioners. As a result, it was anticipated that achieving the target of 30,000 HFSCs would be more difficult than in previous years.
- 4.4 Cllr M Thomas congratulated officers on saving more than the agreed £800,000 during the first year.
- 4.5 The Deputy Chief Fire Officer also provided information about the discussions officers were having with representative bodies regarding changing how firefighters are rostered for duty. Four meetings had taken place to date and the team who had visited various FRs in the UK to research rostering options was now working with the FBU with a view to devising a rostering system specifically for North Wales which would, where possible, also meet the needs and concerns of firefighters. The DCFO confirmed that Members would receive progress updates on a regular basis.
- 4.6 Cllr L W Davies was pleased that in-depth discussions with the FBU were taking place and sought assurance that the criteria for assessing employees within scope of redundancy would be brought to the Executive Panel prior to being finalised.
- 4.7 The Chief Fire Officer addressed Cllr Davies' concerns and reassured Members that any proposals related to the changes will be presented to the Authority for approval. However, the Chief Fire Officer was keen to remind Members that officers were still hopeful that the changes could be achieved without redundancies but that it was a legal requirement to undertake consultation on redundancies as soon as it was an official proposal.
- 4.8 **RESOLVED to note**
- (i) the progress towards making the required financial savings in the current year; and**
 - (ii) the positive ongoing negotiations between senior managers of the Service and the FBU around implementing new ways of working.**

5 ADMINISTRATIVE REVIEW

- 5.1 ACFO Hanks presented the report which advised Members that a review of the current working arrangements of administrative staff within North Wales Fire and Rescue Service was currently taking place.
- 5.2 Following the introduction of the new officer structure on 1st April 2011, it was considered imperative that each function within the Service received the right level of administrative support and a review of the various administrative roles within the Service has been undertaken. An evaluation of the review will be completed at the end of November 2011 to determine the effectiveness of the piloted new arrangements and future proposals.
- 5.3 The Vice-Chair thanked officers for undertaking this review and felt that anything that could be done to lighten the workload of RDS Managers was to be welcomed.
- 5.4 **RESOLVED to note the update regarding the administrative review.**

6 PERFORMANCE MONITORING

- 6.1 The Deputy Chief Fire Officer introduced the performance monitoring report for the period from 1st April 2011 to 30th September 2011. It was pleasing to note that there had been an improvement in all performance areas compared to the same period last year.
- 6.2 The following points were highlighted:
- the 9% decrease in secondary fires could be attributed to the work officers had undertaken with farmers and landowners to raise awareness about grassland and outdoor fires.
 - following a recent Coroner's inquest, it had been confirmed that the occupant of the dwelling fire in Wrexham had died before the fire started and therefore it should be recorded that there had been one death due to an accidental fire in dwelling during the first half of the year. However, it was recognised that the Service had to continue to focus on reducing deaths from accidental fires in dwellings.
 - there had been a 56% decrease in injuries from accidental fires in dwellings and this was possibly attributable to the fire safety information that was being disseminated about how to keep safe in the event of a fire.
 - 62% of homes where a fire occurred had a smoke alarm that activated. It was noted that the main reason for an alarm not actuating was that the fire was not close enough to the detector.
- 6.3 Cllr M Ll Davies was pleased that recent reports in the media had indicated that more people had early warning of a fire in their property due to the smoke alarm. However, a recent article he had read had indicated that flammable liquid had been posted through a letterbox to ignite a fire and asked whether there was anything being done to address this issue. The Senior Fire Safety Manager confirmed that the Arson Reduction Team had specialist equipment which could be fitted at properties that were known as being high risk.

- 6.4 The Chief Fire Officer commented on the low number of malicious fire calls that were being attended and attributed this to the Control staff having been trained well in challenging suspicious calls. There had been criticism when the Chief Fire Officer had first introduced the challenging policy and he was grateful to the Authority for supporting his suggestion at the time.
- 6.5 Cllr T Roberts asked whether it was possible to identify which of the properties that had smoke alarms that did not activate were social housing and which were privately owned, as social housing should have hard-wired fitted alarms which should always activate.
- 6.6 **RESOLVED to note the performance monitoring information for the first half of the year.**
- 7 DRAFT RESPONSE TO THE WELSH GOVERNMENT CONSULTATION ON CHANGING THE PUBLICATION DATE OF FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY ANNUAL IMPROVEMENT PLANS
- 7.1 The report was presented to summarise for Members the contents of a consultation document issued by the Welsh Government relating to changing the publication date of FRA improvement plans; and to propose a response for submission by the 28 November 2011 deadline.
- 7.2 The draft response, attached to the report, supported the intended change of improvement plan publication date and emphasised the consequential need to review the associated guidance documents soon.
- 7.3 **RESOLVED to agree the response for submission before the 28th November 2011 deadline.**
- 8 FEEDBACK REPORTS FROM THE WALES AUDIT OFFICE
- 8.1 The Wales Audit Office had recently undertaken two reviews and the feedback was presented to Members for information. The reviews were on Technology and Information Management.
- 8.2 Alan Morris from the Wales Audit Office presented the feedback on the Technology review. He stated that it was a positive report, but that the Authority needed to ensure it had the capacity to maintain progress.
- 8.3 It was noted that the three Fire and Rescue Authorities had recently completed a collaborative project which harmonised the control systems of the three Services across Wales.
- 8.4 Jeremy Evans introduced the information management feedback. He explained that it had been separated from the technology part as information management was becoming an asset in its own right. Although the Authority's approach to information management was supporting improvement he considered that there were weaknesses and that there was a need to get some clarity in key functions and components of responsibility. He went on to explain that different sets of data held by the Service needed to be treated and protected differently.

- 8.5 Members asked for the Chief Fire Officer's view on the feedback; he felt that the Authority had always tried to respond positively towards the Wales Audit Office, however, on this occasion the CFO expressed disappointment as he felt the Authority had been measured against the standards of a local authority, and that there was a proportionality issue considering that the level of resources within the Authority were limited and being reduced.
- 8.6 In response to concerns about the Wales Audit Office not recognising the difference between a local authority and a Fire and Rescue Authority, Mr Evans believed that he had taken into consideration the organisational size. Mr Evans explained that he had written the report directed towards the FRA not towards a larger organisation such as a Local Authority. He stated that he had not specified the need for additional posts but had suggested that information security be monitored by an existing committee/steering group. He wanted the Authority to recognise the responsibility it had on information and consider how best to protect this important asset of the organisation.
- 8.7 Members felt that the report should be written based on current situation of the Authority not as how one would wish the Authority to be.
- 8.8 **RESOLVED to note feedback on both reviews.**

PART II

9 RETAINED DUTY SYSTEM (RDS) FIRE STATION TEMPLATE

- 9.1 ACFO Hanks presented the report which informed Members about the proposed template for future RDS fire stations and potential accommodation for police accommodation. It was considered desirable to standardise the future design of RDS stations to reduce project design costs, to curtail the consultation process and to fix the parameters of the budget.
- 9.2 It was anticipated that work would start on the new Nefyn RDS fire station in 2012, but that it had not gone out to tender yet. The Chief Fire Officer reiterated the importance of maintaining current building stock despite the economic climate; some stations would be in danger of becoming unfit for purpose unless they were renovated within a reasonable timescale.
- 9.3 **RESOLVED to**
- (i) note the proposed plan template and capital cost for a RDS fire station; and**
 - (ii) endorse the co-location of the Police Office within the station subject to a contribution to capital and annual running costs from NWP.**

10 CAPITAL PROGRAMME

- 10.1 ACFO Hanks provided Members with an update on the North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority's capital programme.

- 10.2 The Wrexham project continues and the latest project programme indicates that the full business case, incorporating the final design of the building, will be submitted to Welsh Government in June 2012 with approval anticipated in August 2012. Cllr Jeffares thanked ACFO Hanks and his team for all their hard work in progressing the Wrexham project.
- 10.3 Those fire stations and premises that needed to comply with the disability and equality legislation continue to be upgraded to meet the requirements of the legislation as far as reasonably practicable. Work on several stations had already been completed.
- 10.4 **RESOLVED to note the contents of the report.**