

## **NORTH WALES FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY**

Minutes of the meeting of North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority held on Monday 20<sup>th</sup> June 2011 at Council Chamber, Ruthin. Meeting commenced at 10.45am.

### **PRESENT**

<b>Councillor</b>	<b>Representing</b>
S Frobisher (Chair)	Denbighshire County Council
A M Jones (Vice-Chair)	Anglesey County Council
D Barratt	Flintshire County Council
M LI Davies	Denbighshire County Council
B Dunn	Flintshire County Council
G C Evans	Denbighshire County Council
E C George	Wrexham County Borough Council
M Griffith	Gwynedd Council
P Jeffares	Wrexham County Borough Council
E M Jones	Gwynedd Council
N M Jones	Flintshire County Council
D Kelly	Wrexham County Borough Council
J A Kelly	Wrexham County Borough Council
D Mackie	Flintshire County Council
A Minshull	Flintshire County Council
J V Owen	Anglesey County Council
J R Skelland	Wrexham County Borough Council
G O Williams	Gwynedd 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); D Docx (Deputy Chief Fire Officer); C Hanks, P Claydon and R Simmons (Assistant Chief Fire Officers); R Fairhead (Training and Development Manager); G W Griffiths (Senior Fire Safety Manager); G Brandrick (Senior Operations 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); S Roberts (Head of Facilities Department); A Davies (Member Liaison Officer) and S Jones (Member Liaison Assistant).

### **APOLOGIES**

<b>Councillor</b>	<b>Representing</b>
L W Davies	Anglesey County Council
P C Evans	Conwy County Borough Council
G James	Flintshire County Council
W Knightly	Conwy County Borough Council
T Roberts	Gwynedd Council
W P Roberts	Conwy County Borough Council
A Tansley	Conwy County Borough Council
M Thomas	Conwy County Borough Council

1 SERIOUS INCIDENT

1.1 The Chief Fire Officer gave Members an update on the caravan fire at Talybont that happened on 11<sup>th</sup> June. Two men from the same family had lost their lives, and a two-year old girl had sustained serious burns. Officers are checking on her condition on a daily basis.

1.2 Members expressed their appreciation and thanks to the firefighters who had attended the incident.

2 DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

2.1 None.

3 MINUTES

3.1 The minutes of the Fire and Rescue Authority meeting held on 21<sup>st</sup> March 2011 were submitted for approval.

3.2 **RESOLVED to approve the minutes as a true and correct record of proceedings.**

4 MATTERS ARISING

4.1 There were no matters arising.

5 CHAIR'S REPORT

5.1 The Chair's report listed meetings and events attended by Cllr S Frobisher and Cllr A M Jones in their capacities as Chair and Vice-Chair between 22<sup>nd</sup> March and 20<sup>th</sup> June 2011.

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

6 2011 CONSULTATION ON COMBINED IMPROVEMENT PLAN AND RISK REDUCTION PLAN

6.1 The report was presented to ask for the Authority's ratification of the decisions made by the Executive Panel in relation to the content and consultation arrangements for the Combined Improvement and Risk Reduction Plan (RRP) 2012-13.

6.2 The Deputy Chief Fire Officer explained that the Authority's existing combined Improvement and Risk Reduction Plan published in October 2010 contained seven improvement objectives relating to strategic effectiveness, service quality, service availability, sustainability and fairness in 2011/12 and beyond. 21 actions arose from those seven objectives, several of which will take more than one year to achieve. It is therefore proposed to continue with the same objectives and update the action plan for 2012/13.

- 6.3 With the Authority's agreement, the 2011 consultation on the combined RRP/Improvement Plan will be in a bilingual three-fold sheet containing a brief summary of the seven objectives with further information being available on the Authority's website.
- 6.4 **RESOLVED to ratify the Executive Panel's decisions for the content of the draft combined Improvement and Risk Reduction Plan 2012-13 and associated consultation process.**
- 7 TREASURY MANAGEMENT ACTIVITY AND ACTUAL PRUDENTIAL INDICATORS FOR 2010-2011
- 7.1 The Treasurer introduced the report which is an annual requirement of the Authority's reporting procedures. The report details the treasury activity and the actual Prudential Indicators for 2010-2011 in accordance with the requirements of the Prudential Code.
- 7.2 The Audit Committee had considered the report at its meeting on 6 June 2011; Members had no major observations nor could find any major risks in the report and therefore they had recommended that it be approved by the Authority.
- 7.3 **RESOLVED to approve the actual 2010-2011 Prudential Indicators.**

Cllr M LI Davies arrived at this juncture.

- 8 FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE 2010-2011
- 8.1 The report provided Members with a review of the financial performance of the Authority for 2010-11.
- 8.2 The Treasurer explained that it had been a reasonably good year in terms of not exceeding the budget. This was the second year that the Authority was allowed to hold reserves as a result of legislative changes. The Authority had held £418,000 in reserves as at 1 April 2010 and due to effective budget management had not needed to use these reserves to fund expenditure in-year.
- 8.3 The report was presented to the Audit Committee on 6 June 2011 and Members at that meeting had no major observations nor could find any major risks. The Committee recommended that the underspend of £626,741 be transferred to a General Reserve.
- 8.4 In response to Members' questions about apparent overspend in some budget headings, the Deputy Chief Fire Officer explained that regular monitoring meetings with budget holders are held throughout the year. When an estimated underspend is identified in one department the money is transferred to another department which enables equipment to be purchased earlier than planned and therefore easing the pressure on the budget for the following year.

- 8.5 Cllr D Kelly asked about the income budget line and the disparity between actual income and expected income. It was explained to Members that the grant from the Welsh Government for emergency planning had been withdrawn in 2010/11; however, this had not significantly affected the Service's emergency planning work. Emergency planning is undertaken by the Fire and Rescue Service in conjunction with local authorities in relation to COMAH sites and other risks within North Wales.
- 8.6 It was noted that the income for Special Service Calls is less than anticipated due to a reduction in the number of incidents for which the Authority raises invoices. Special service calls covers the services provided that are outside of the Authority's statutory duties, some of which are provided on a chargeable basis.
- 8.7 There had been a decrease in income earned from outside training courses in particular commercial fire safety. The decision had been taken to cease this service as it was decided that a more effective use of the resources would be to deliver the community fire safety message to the business community at large. Cllr M Ll Davies had attended a recent course held and felt it was a valuable course for businesses.
- 8.8 Cllr George asked about the pension overspend and whether the Authority needed to be aware of any issues. The Deputy Chief Fire Officer explained that officers are carefully managing ill-health retirements and that although there is a pension provision available to fund any overspend it has not been used to date.
- 8.9 **RESOLVED to approve the transfer of the end of year underspend to a General Reserve fund.**
- 9 ANNUAL REPORT OF BAD DEBTS WRITTEN OFF
- 9.1 At the request of the Authority, the Treasurer submits an annual report listing all the debts under £5,000 which have been written off as irrecoverable. The report detailed bad debts totalling £2,376.47 written off between 1<sup>st</sup> April 2010 and 31<sup>st</sup> March 2011.
- 9.2 Members' questions about the bad debts were answered by officers and with regards to the sale of equipment, the Finance Manager agreed to provide further details about the type of equipment that had been sold.
- 9.3 **RESOLVED to note the information provided.**
- 10 SUMMARY OF PROGRESS AGAINST INTERNAL REVIEWS
- 10.1 Members received an update, from the Deputy Chief Fire Officer, as to the progress of a number of internal reviews which directly contribute to the Fire and Rescue Authority's Resource Strategy Objectives for 2011/12.

- 10.2 The proposed reviews and changes included:
- implementing the new officer cover structure
  - introducing new ways of delivering the legislative fire safety function
  - reviewing the support staff function
  - re-designing the operational support and development function and the training, development and learning function.

10.3 It was noted that the new officer structure came into being on 1 April 2011. The operational benefits of the new structure will be monitored quarterly and the cashable savings of the restructure, amounting to £450,000, will also be monitored internally.

10.4 **RESOLVED to note the progress to date against the Resource Strategy Objectives.**

## 11 COMMUNITY SAFETY ACTIVITIES

11.1 The report was presented by the Senior Fire Safety Manager to inform Members of the development of community safety activities in 2010/2011 and to report that 36,900 home fire safety checks (HFSCs) had been undertaken during the year.

11.2 It was noted that partnership working has highlighted the importance of information sharing protocols to identify vulnerable individuals. Existing information sharing protocols had been reviewed and the Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Trust had signed a Memorandum of Understanding for the first time.

11.3 The Service launched an initiative called 'Fire Cruz' to deliver road safety education to 16-25 year olds; it had proved successful with over 5,000 young people participating in the scheme. The School Education Programme continues with staff visiting schools to discuss fire safety; 27,000 children have attended an awareness session during the year.

11.4 The Phoenix scheme continues to be an important element of the Service's work with young people and is an important area identified within the Welsh Government's Children and Young People strategy. Over 300 individuals participated in the Phoenix scheme during 2010-11. Cllr Dunn wished to thank all those involved with the Phoenix scheme for their excellent work with young people and this was reiterated by other Members.

11.5 In response to Cllr Barratt's question about the ALP posts being moved to the Community Safety team it was noted that this had not had any impact whatsoever on the use of the ALPs at incidents within North Wales.

11.6 **RESOLVED to note the**

- (i) **achievement of the Service in exceeding the Fire and Rescue Authority target for home fire safety checks;**
- (ii) **continual development of community safety activities in the areas of RTC education and youth intervention.**

Cllr David Kelly left the meeting at this juncture.

## 12 COMPLAINTS AND LETTERS OF APPRECIATION

- 12.1 The report was presented to inform and update Members in respect of the number of complaints and letters of appreciation received from the public for the period April 1<sup>st</sup> 2010 to March 31<sup>st</sup> 2011.
- 12.2 Although a total of 40 complaints had been received, only 10 had been substantiated. Assistant Chief Fire Officer Hanks explained that five driving-related complaints had been received during the year, which in context of the 16,418 emergency vehicle journeys the Service had attended, was a very low number. It was confirmed that every complaint is investigated with those individuals found to be responsible being given more training and reminded of the standard of driving required within the Service.
- 12.3 It was noted that 81 letters, cards, e-mails and Facebook messages were received during the year expressing appreciation and satisfaction with the Service. The letters of appreciation received covered a wide range of Fire and Rescue Service activities including visits to schools, hosting station visits, operational incidents and partnership working.
- 12.4 **RESOLVED to note the number of complaints and expressions of appreciation received.**

## 13 REGIONAL LEADERSHIP BOARD, PARTNERSHIP REVIEW AND EFFICIENCY AND IMPROVEMENT PROGRAMME BOARD

- 13.1 The Clerk provided an update on the Regional Leadership Board set up in North Wales. The main development of interest to the Fire and Rescue Authority is the Safer Communities Committee which will be established towards the end of the year. The Board is also working to identify possible areas for collaboration. A Compact has been established by the Welsh Government which will be signed by public bodies to show commitment to collaboration.
- 13.2 At this point, the Chief Fire Officer informed Members about the appointment of Brian Fraser, as Fire Advisor to the Minister.
- 13.3 **RESOLVED to note the information provided.**

## 14 GOLD COMMAND POLICY

- 14.1 The report was presented to inform Members of the Service's policy to provide Gold Command support at major incidents and emergencies.
- 14.2 The Deputy Chief Fire Officer explained that the principal officers work on a rota basis in order to provide cover to be on-call 24/7 to ensure that a Gold Commander (Fire) is available where the nature of the incident deems this level of strategic support and advice necessary.

- 14.3 The Gold Command policy provides a clear development and maintenance of competence path. Initial training and ongoing assessments are identified at local, regional and national level to ensure Gold Commanders (Fire) are fully equipped with the essential skills, knowledge and understanding required to fulfil this role.
- 14.4 Cllr Skelland raised an issue about the importance of having local involvement and local knowledge where a major incident occurs. The Chief Fire Officer confirmed that multi-agency gold command will always have the involvement of the local authority, usually through the local Chief Executive.
- 14.5 **RESOLVED to note the information provided.**
- 15 MEMBERS ALLOWANCE SCHEME
- 15.1 The Treasurer presented the report which asked Members to:
- consider if the approved mileage allowance payments (AMAP) for the Members' Allowances Scheme should be amended after the recent change to the AMAP in The Budget 2011; and
  - approve some minor amendments to the current Scheme.
- 15.2 During the Budget announcement, the Chancellor of the Exchequer said that the AMAP for the first 10,000 miles of business travel would be increased from 40p to 45p per mile with effect from 6 April 2011. It was noted that the Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales, which has no direct influence over Fire and Rescue Authority Schemes, had recently decided to amend its determination in relation to mileage expenses to be the same as the new AMAP i.e. 45p per mile. However, because of the way in which the Authority's Scheme is worded, there would have to be a specific resolution to amend the rate if the Authority was minded to adopt the new AMAP.
- 15.3 Cllr George asked about the position in Local Authorities across North Wales, and Cllr M LI Davies asked whether staff expenses were being amended. The Treasurer confirmed that neither issue had a bearing on the Fire and Rescue Authority and it was a decision solely for Members.
- 15.4 Cllr G C Evans said that he preferred to see the mileage allowance remain at the current rate of 40p per mile.
- 15.5 Cllr George proposed that the mileage allowance be raised to 45p per mile and this was seconded by Cllr A M Jones. Members were asked to vote by a show of hands; five Members were in favour and 13 against.
- 15.6 **RESOLVED**
- following a majority vote, that the mileage rate for 2011/12 should remain at 40p per mile;**
  - to approve the minor amendments to the current Members Allowance Scheme.**
- 16 MINUTES FOR INFORMATION

- 16.1 The minutes of the Executive Panel meeting held on 9<sup>th</sup> May 2011 were submitted for information.
- 16.2 **RESOLVED to note the unconfirmed minutes of the meeting held on 9<sup>th</sup> May 2011.**

## PART II

### 17 WREXHAM FIRE STATION

- 17.1 ACFO Hanks gave Members a presentation about the latest developments regarding the Wrexham Fire and Ambulance project. It was noted that the police had withdrawn from the project in February 2011 as it no longer met their business needs. The outline business case had been prepared in 2010 and had been approved by the Welsh Government in 2011.
- 17.2 Previous proposed sites had proved to be unsuitable. A new site has now been identified and a feasibility study commissioned by the Welsh Ambulance Service Trust (WAST). Members were reminded that the Welsh Health Estates will fund the land purchase and that the Fire and Rescue Authority's budget for the project is capped at £5million. The Chief Fire Officer also reminded Members that the existing fire station was not fit for purpose and it was unfair to expect staff to work in those conditions; if a solution for a new station was not found soon, work would have to be done at the station to enable staff to continue working there.
- 17.3 Cllr George welcomed the update and indicated that the Welsh Government Member for Wrexham is now the Minister for Health, and she has been supportive of the project to date and will hopefully help move the project forward in her new role.
- 17.4 A further update will be provided at the Executive Panel meeting on 18<sup>th</sup> July. Members thanked ACFO Hanks and his colleagues for their work on the project.
- 17.5 **RESOLVED to note the information provided.**