

NORTH WALES FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY

Minutes of the Executive Panel Meeting of the North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority held on 16th November 2009 at Fire and Rescue Headquarters, St Asaph. Meeting commenced at 2pm.

PRESENT

Cllr S Frobisher (Chair)	Denbighshire County Council
Cllr A M Jones (Vice-Chair)	Anglesey County Council
Cllr L W Davies	Anglesey County Council
Cllr B Dunn	Flintshire County Council
Cllr G C Evans	Denbighshire County Council
Cllr G James	Flintshire County Council
Cllr P Jeffares	Wrexham County Borough Council
Cllr J V Owen	Anglesey County Council
Cllr T Roberts	Gwynedd Council
Cllr W P Roberts	Conwy County Borough Council
Cllr M Thomas	Conwy County Borough Council

ALSO PRESENT:

S A Smith (Chief Fire Officer and Chief Executive); D Docx (Deputy Chief Fire Officer); K Finch (Treasurer); B Davies (Monitoring Officer); C Hanks, P Claydon and R Simmons (Assistant Chief Fire Officers); G Brandrick (Service Development Manager); R Fairhead (Senior Fire Safety Manager); G Griffiths (Senior Operations Manager); S Morris (Corporate Planning Manager); T Williams (Corporate Communications Manager); J Brown (Finance Manager); I Williams (Executive Support Manager); A Davies (Member Liaison Officer).

Apologies:

Cllr M LI Davies	Denbighshire County Council
Cllr T Evans	Wrexham County Borough Council
Cllr W T Owen	Gwynedd Council
C Everett	Clerk to the Authority

1 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

1.1 None.

2 MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 21ST SEPTEMBER 2009

2.1 The minutes of the meeting held on 21st September 2009 were approved as a true and correct record.

3 MATTERS ARISING

3.1 ACFO Hanks gave members an update on the Wrexham fire station project. A letter had been sent to the Assembly confirming the Authority's participation and the proposed outline business case had been scheduled. Work had been done to reduce the size of the land needed from 4 acres to

3 acres and costs per square metre had been revisited to ensure that the Fire and Rescue part of the project remains within the £5m budget limit.

4 BUDGET OPTIONS 2010/11

4.1 The report was presented to update Members on the budget pressures for 2010/11 and the progress made to fund these pressures by means other than increasing the levy on constituent authorities.

4.2 The DCFO introduced the report and informed Members that the Assembly had confirmed that it would fund Firelink for the remainder of 2009/10 and for 2010/11. Other issues highlighted were as follows:

4.3 The pay award was difficult to predict; 2.5% had been estimated for 2009/10. However, at the end of the negotiations process firefighters and control staff had been awarded 1.25% and all other staff 1%. Therefore, if a similar pay award was allocated for 2010/11 there would almost be enough in the base budget to fund it. Members felt that the pay award was likely to be similar if not frozen for 2010/11.

4.4 The job evaluation process for all support staff is near completion and the results will be issued to staff in the New Year. Members felt that the five posts which were not part of the original establishment, but had been introduced to reduce the amount spent on outside contractors, should be incorporated into the base budget.

4.5 The revenue investment of £541,000 into ICT was required, however, the Treasurer explained that the only potential way of mitigating costs was to undertake further work to see if any costs could be allocated to the capital budget.

4.6 The CFO informed Members that the reserves issue had now been resolved and an Order has been made to enable fire and rescue authorities to hold reserves. Currently the Authority did not have significant reserves and there appears to be little scope to build up a meaningful reserve in the medium term.

4.7 **RESOLVED to note the above pressures which may form part of the Fire and Rescue Authority's revenue budget for 2010/11.**

5 REVIEW OF THE HOME FIRE SAFETY CHECK REFERRALS

5.1 The report was presented to inform Members of the increase in the number of referrals for home fire safety checks (HFSC) received by North Wales Fire and Rescue Service from the Local Authorities since 2007 and future improvements to the working arrangements.

5.2 The Senior Fire Safety Manager informed Members that following the development and signing of the memorandum of understanding with each local authority the number of HFSCs referrals had increased. However, to date, some referrals had been made via the freephone number with no record that it was an agency referral. This issue had now been resolved and

the new Records Management System would ensure that a more accurate record was kept of the number of HFSCs undertaken as a result of Local Authority referrals.

- 5.3 The Senior Fire Safety Manager is reviewing the HFSC referral system and the memorandums of understanding signed by all local authorities. Each county safety manager will be meeting with their respective Chief Executive to discuss improving the dialogue and co-operation with the local authority partners and therefore increasing the number of HFSCs.
- 5.4 Members congratulated everyone involved with this work. Cllr L W Davies commented that it was good to see that Anglesey had made the most referrals. A lot of co-operation had taken place between the council and the Service and he thanked Richard Fairhead and Huw Roberts for their work in improving the promotion of fire safety on Anglesey.
- 5.5 **RESOLVED to:**
- (i) **note the contents of the report and the measures that are being developed to increase the number of local authority referrals and improve the referral system; and**
 - (ii) **agree that a request is made to all six local authorities to review their performance and co-operation under the protocol with the aid of a joint meeting.**

6 RETAINED DUTY SYSTEM (RDS) RECRUITMENT

- 6.1 The report presented outlined a proposed approach to the recruitment of personnel to the retained duty system, whose primary employment is with other public sector organisations.
- 6.2 ACFO Simmons reminded Members of the issues around recruitment and retention of RDS personnel and especially the challenges in providing fire cover in rural areas. Exit interviews are conducted and individuals tend to leave for personal reasons and due to demands of their primary employer.
- 6.3 In the Fire and Rescue National Framework for Wales 2008-2011, the Assembly has made a commitment to work with FRAs to encourage more people to join the RDS and is committed to targeting public sector partners to encourage them to release employees to work the RDS. The Assembly has established a committee to undertake a RDS review and this issue will be considered as part of the review; the committee is chaired by the Fire and Rescue Advisor, Paul Young. Cllr M Thomas suggested that the local CBI be contacted to see if they could provide support.
- 6.4 As well as the Clerk's offer to speak to local authorities, the Vice-Chair suggested that members meet with their Leaders and executive members to highlight the issue.
- 6.5 **RESOLVED to note the contents of the report.**

PART II REPORTS

7 CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2009/10

7.1 The report was presented to update Members on the current status of North Wales Fire and Rescue Service's capital programme for estates. The programme focuses on meeting requirements of the Disability and Discrimination Act (DDA) and addressing equalities issues at stations. Discussions have been held with the Welsh Assembly about financial contributions towards this programme. In order to be eligible the work has to be complete before the end of March 2010.

7.2 The Chief Fire Officer informed Members of the increasing pressure on cost of compliance with external regulations; at some point in the future adjustments will have to be made to the revenue budget to reflect the cost involved in maintaining equipment and infrastructure.

7.3 **RESOLVED to note the contents of the report and approve the revised budget for the DDA and Equality project.**

8 OFFICER COVER REVIEW

8.1 Members received a presentation on the officer cover review. The RRP working group had received the same presentation at its meeting a week earlier and Members had requested that it be on the agenda for the Executive Panel.

8.2 As part of the risk reduction plan 2009/10 it had been agreed that an officer cover review would be undertaken. Employees had already received a similar presentation on the officer cover review and they had also been surveyed anonymously so that they were free to give their views. The representative bodies had been informed and involved in the process.

8.3 The majority of Members were supportive of the review to date and looked forward to receiving a full report at the December meeting of the Authority. Cllr J V Owen expressed his concern about the review.

8.4 **RESOLVED to note the information presented.**