

NORTH WALES FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY EXECUTIVE PANEL

Minutes of the Executive Panel Meeting of the North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority held on 22 October 2018 at Fire and Rescue Headquarters, St Asaph. Meeting commenced at 10am.

PRESENT

Councillors:

M Ll Davies (Chair)	Denbighshire County Council
M Bateman	Flintshire County Council
B Blakeley	Denbighshire County Council
A Davies	Denbighshire County Council
M Dixon	Wrexham County Borough Council
V Gay	Flintshire County Council
R Griffiths	Anglesey County Council
J B Hughes	Gwynedd Council
E W Jones	Anglesey County Council
P R Lewis	Conwy County Borough Council
A Tansley	Conwy County Borough Council

ALSO PRESENT:

S A Smith (Chief Fire Officer and Chief Executive); K Finch (Treasurer); C Everett (Clerk); R Fairhead and K Roberts (Assistant Chief Fire Officers); S Morris and H MacArthur (Assistant Chief Officers); B Millington (Deputy Corporate Communications Manager); A Davies (Members Liaison Officer).

1. APOLOGIES

Cllr R E Parry	Conwy County Borough Council
Cllr G Williams	Gwynedd Council

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

2.1 None.

3. NOTICE OF URGENT MATTERS

3.1 The Chair asked the CFO to give an update on the firefighters' pay issue. The CFO reminded members of the background information and that there had been extensive discussions at national level linked to the broadening of the firefighter's role and a pay increase. The CFO referred to a letter from the General Secretary of the FBU to the Employers' Secretary on 18 October stating the requirements and that

in order for the FBU to agree to the broadening of the role it was seeking a 17% increase to firefighters' pay. This will be discussed by the National Joint Council at its next meeting.

3.2 **RESOLVED to note the information.**

4 MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 16 JULY 2018

4.1 The minutes of the last meeting were submitted for approval.

4.2 **RESOLVED to approve the minutes as a true and correct record.**

5 MATTERS ARISING

5.1 Grass fires – ACFO Fairhead gave members an update on the grass fire incidents over the summer. There had been nearly a 100% increase in grass fires compared to the same period in the previous year; there had been five very large fires and the one in Llantysilio had been attended on nearly 70 days. In terms of the budget, ACO MacArthur explained that the grass fire activity far exceeded the budget that had been set at the beginning of the financial year. The projected additional amount, including cost of staff, fuel, food consumables and wear and tear of equipment, will be between £550k and £650k.

5.2 The appointment process for the role of Clerk/Monitoring Officer will commence in November with a view to the interviews being held in January 2019. An Executive Panel member from each local authority will be required for the appointment panel.

6 PERFORMANCE MONITORING – APRIL TO SEPTEMBER 2018

6.1 The report presented contained information relating to NWFRS' activity and performance against improvement objectives for the first half of the 2018-19 financial year.

6.2 ACO Morris led members through the report which gave detailed information on the number of incidents attended between April and September 2018. Overall there had been an increase in the total number of fires with the majority of the increase relating to secondary fires; this category includes the grass fires which can be attributed to the increase of 49% compared to the same period in 2017/18.

- 6.3 For the first half of 2017/18, the number of special service incidents attended was a lot higher than usual due to the collaborative pilots and projects that the Authority chose to participate in. In 2018/19 there had been a 51% reduction in the number of these incidents attended compared with the previous year and this can be attributed to the cessation of Community Assistance Team (CAT) and co-responding activities. However, the Service continues to have an agreement with North Wales Police to assist with searching for vulnerable individuals missing from home; ACFO Fairhead explained that NWP requests assistance and if resource is available, a crew will be sent to assist with searches and to date the Service has been involved in 18 incidents.
- 6.4 Whilst it was pleasing to note that the number of accidental fires in dwellings had reduced by 17% compared with the same period in 2017/18 (190 to 157) and that there had been no serious injuries, there had been two accidental dwelling fatalities between April and September 2018. In other categories of injuries, there had been a reduction in the number of people recorded as having slight injuries and those who had been advised to seek a precautionary check up.
- 6.5 Members enquired whether it was possible to charge a fee when a fire is identified as deliberate. The CFO explained that the legislation precludes the Service from charging as it is dealt with through the criminal justice system.

6.6 **RESOLVED to note the contents of the performance monitoring report.**

7 BUDGET SETTING 2019/20

- 7.1 ACO MacArthur presented the report to members which detailed the process, planning assumptions and timescales for setting the FRA's revenue budget for 2019/20.
- 7.2 Members were reminded of the requirement for the FRA to set its provisional revenue budget for 2019/20 at its meeting on 17 December 2018. The preliminary work required to establish the base budget has commenced which includes a review of current expenditure levels, key planning assumptions and risks. The findings from this work will be examined at a members' budget planning workshop on 16 November to enable the draft budget to be produced.
- 7.3 It was noted that some of the major issues to be considered include pay, pensions and capital financing risks. It is anticipated that pension costs will be funded nationally. In order to mitigate the capital financing risks, capital expenditure will be looked at in detail as it incurs cost for future years.

- 7.4 **RESOLVED to note the:**
- (i) **planning assumptions being used to set the revenue budget for 2019/20;**
 - (ii) **budget planning workshop for members on 16 November;**
 - (iii) **deadline for approval of the 2019/20 revenue budget by the FRA.**

8 GOVERNANCE AND FINANCE ARRANGEMENTS FOR FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITIES IN WALES

8.1 The Chief Fire Officer gave members an update. The Cabinet Secretary has indicated that he will be issuing a White Paper on the new finance and governance arrangements for FRAs in Wales; this will be published on 13 November following its presentation to the Senedd. It is anticipated that a short consultation period will follow. However, in terms of timescales any permanent changes to financial arrangements are unlikely to happen immediately and therefore an interim arrangement will need to be put in place.

8.2 **RESOLVED to note the update.**

9 HEALTH AND SAFETY EXECUTIVE INSPECTION

9.1 ACFO Fairhead presented the report which provided information relating to the forthcoming inspection of North Wales Fire and Rescue Service (NWFRS) by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE).

9.2 Members were informed that in July 2018 the Service was notified of the HSE's intention to carry out an inspection of NWFRS as part of its programme of inspections of Fire and Rescue Services across the UK. The inspection of NWFRS will take place on 24 and 25 October 2018. It was noted that preparations, including the collection of evidence required by the HSE, are being overseen by an officer-led steering group.

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

10 STRATEGIC RISK MANAGEMENT

10.1 ACO Morris presented the report which summarised the content of the Authority's strategic risk register in accordance with the Strategic Risk Management Policy.

10.2 The report was provided in order to keep Executive Panel members informed of the Authority's strategic risk register as had previously been agreed. The register details known risks that could potentially prevent the Authority from achieving its planned outcomes and/or delivering its core functions. Register entries are ascribed risk scores that are regularly re-evaluated by officers to reflect the current state and the predicted effect of planned countermeasures.

10.3 **RESOLVED to note the identified strategic risks that the Authority faces.**

11 ANNUAL IMPROVEMENT REPORT

11.1 ACO Morris introduced Steve Frank, Nick Selwyn and Euros Lake from the Wales Audit Office who had attended to present the annual improvement report to members.

11.2 Mr Selwyn explained that in addition to the work required under the Local Government Measure to look at improvement, objectives and review the work undertaken during the previous year, the Wales Audit Office also undertakes local studies. At NWFRS it had undertaken an audit of the management of white fleet; overall it was a positive report and some recommendations had been made for improvement.

11.3 In addition to the above, the WAO is now also required to review work undertaken by public authorities in terms of the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act. Euros Lake will be meeting with the CFO to agree on two areas of the Authority's work to be reviewed in relation to the Act.

11.4 Cllr Lewis commented that the Authority is accustomed to receiving positive reports from the WAO and that he anticipates no issues being identified with regard to reviewing the Authority's actions in relation to the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act.

11.5 **RESOLVED to note the annual improvement report which has previously been published on the WAO's website.**