

NORTH WALES FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY

Minutes of the Executive Panel meeting of North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority held on Monday 5th March 2007 at Fire and Rescue Service Headquarters, St. Asaph. Meeting commenced at 2pm.

Present:

Councillor

T Roberts (Chairman)
E C George (Vice-Chairman)

J M Vaughan
S Frobisher
J A Smith
E F Evans
E Morgan Jones
W T Owen
G M Craddock
J A Roberts

Representing

Gwynedd Council
Wrexham County Borough Council

Conwy County Borough Council
Denbighshire County Council
Denbighshire County Council
Flintshire County Council
Gwynedd Council
Gwynedd Council
Wrexham County Borough Council
Ynys Môn County Council

Also present:

S A Smith (Chief Fire Officer and Chief Executive); I R Miller (Clerk and Monitoring Officer to the Authority); C Enness (Deputy Chief Fire Officer); P S Claydon (Assistant Chief Fire Officer, Service Delivery); D Docx (Assistant Chief Officer, Finance and Procurement); S Morris (Corporate Planning Manager); W A Murphy (Senior Operations Manager); D G Roberts (Retained Duty System Project Manager); R Jones (Chief Officer's Advisory Team Support Manager) and Rh Evans (Member Liaison Officer).

PART I

1) Apologies

S C Jones
D Barratt
M Williams
W J Chorlton
K W Finch

Conwy County Borough Council
Flintshire County Council
Wrexham County Borough Council
Ynys Môn County Council
Treasurer to the Authority

2) Notice of Urgent Matters

Members were informed by the Chairman that no items had been submitted to him or the Clerk for consideration.

The Chairman requested the Panel's views on the Authority's representation at this year's Local Government Association's (LGA) Annual Fire Conference which was due to be held at Peterborough between 13th and 14th March 2007. In the past the Authority had resolved that only the Chief Fire Officer and Chairman should attend this Conference, this was contrary to the arrangements for attendance at the annual Fire Conference which permitted the Chief Fire Officer, Deputy Chief Fire Officer, Chairman and Vice-Chairman to attend. The Chairman explained that in his view it was important that the Vice-Chairman had the opportunity to attend the LGA Fire Conference as part of his personal development. Members concurred with this view and:

Resolved: - to permit the Vice-Chairman to attend the LGA Annual Fire Conference 2007 with the Chairman and Chief Fire Officer or his representative.

Johnstown Rail Tragedy: members were informed by the Chairman that the actions of Service personnel from Johnstown and Wrexham fire stations, responding to an incident when a young girl died after being hit by a train, had been praised by Inspector Derek Cheetham of the British Transport Police. The Chairman hoped that he would, by the Authority meeting on 19th March 2007, have in his possession a letter of acknowledgement to the Service from the British Transport Police.

3) Minutes

The following minutes were submitted:

- i. Executive Panel meeting held on 24th January 2007

Resolved: - to approve the minutes as a true and correct record of proceedings

4) Matters Arising

The following matters arose from the minutes submitted:

Page 9, Item 12a) - Smoke/Fire Alarms in Dwelling Fires: The Vice-Chairman advised members that, following his comments on this item of business at the previous meeting, he had met with Wrexham County Borough Council's Chief Housing Officer to raise the issue of smoke/fire alarm installation in council owned dwellings. The Chief Housing Officer had given him an assurance that he would be contacting the Service with a view to resolving the problem. The Chief Fire Officer confirmed that a request for a meeting had been received.

Page 10, Item 12a) - Smoke/Fire Alarms in Dwelling Fires (resolution): In reply to a question from Councillor John Smith, the Chairman informed the Panel that the following members had been appointed to serve as Community Fire Safety Champions: Councillor John Smith, Denbighshire; Councillor Ted Evans, Flintshire; Councillor Trevor Roberts, Gwynedd; Councillor Ted George, Wrexham and

Councillor John Chorlton, Ynys Môn. Conwy County Borough Council's 'Champion' would be confirmed ahead of the Fire and Rescue Authority meeting on 19th March. The Chairman said that he would, at that meeting, be asking the 'Champions' to set the date of their inaugural meeting.

5) The Proposals for the Draft Risk Reduction Plan for 2008/09

The Risk Reduction Plan (RRP) Working Group at its meeting on 30th January 2007 had explored areas for inclusion in the Authority's RRP Action Plan 2008/09. At its subsequent meeting, held immediately prior to the current Executive Panel meeting, the Working Group had considered data and figures in relation to how the Service could further enhance its prevention, protection, intervention and performance and risk management strategies. It had formulated a number of proposals for the Executive Panel to recommend the Fire and Rescue Authority to include in its Draft RRP Action Plan for 2008/09. Following consideration of the information provided and the proposals submitted the Panel:

Resolved: - to recommend to the Fire and Rescue Authority that the following proposals be included in its Risk Reduction Plan revised draft Action Plan for 2008/09;

- i details of a revised intense community fire safety strategy with a view to reducing the number of fire deaths;***
- ii details of the consultation that would be initiated on proposals to introduce a robust policy to reduce the number of false alarms from automated fire alarms (AFAs), including a proposal to implement a progressive registration programme for automatic fire alarm systems under which the Service would gather information on the size and scope of the AFA systems and the risks they protected. The Service may then issue a Unique Reference Number (URN) that would be used by premises to identify the system when fire signals are passed to the Service's Control Room;***
- iii details of the review that would be initiated into the Operational, Tactical and Strategic Officer cover across the Service and the review that would be undertaken on the rostering of fire crews with a view to increasing station availability;***
- iv details of the enhancement of the Service's performance management framework and risk management arrangements;***
- v in the meantime, prior to the commencement of the public consultation stage, the Authority to initiate an informal discussion on its proposals with the Welsh Assembly Government's (WAG) Minister for Social Justice and Regeneration; and***
- vi that the draft Action Plan for 2008/09, including where possible estimated costings/anticipated efficiency savings, be submitted to the Fire and Rescue Authority at its meeting on 18th June 2007 for approval for public consultation.***

During the discussion on the above item of business Councillor J A Roberts declared a personal interest in the discussion relating to the review of officer

cover, as his brother was an officer with the Service on the Flexible Duty System who provided operational officer cover. He subsequently withdrew from the remainder of the discussion on the review of officer cover.

6) Consultation on 'Making the Connections – Local Service Boards in Wales'

The Clerk introduced his report and appendices (previously circulated), which included for members' consideration a draft response to the Welsh Assembly Government's (WAG) consultation document 'Making the Connections – Local Service Boards in Wales'. He explained that the report summarised the contents of the consultation document and he thanked the Service's Assistant Chief Officer (Finance and Procurement) and Corporate Planning Manager for their contributions to the report before proceeding to detail the points highlighted within it. Panel members were advised by the Clerk that, as the Service already participated in a range of community and local strategic partnerships, the Authority should not have any objections to having a duty imposed on it to participate in Local Service Boards (LSBs). He proceeded to explain that as LSBs were seen by the WAG as an integral part of joined-up government, whose ultimate aim was to improve and enhance service delivery, it was vital that fire and rescue authorities would be represented on these Boards once established. Members therefore needed to decide on the Authority/Service's anticipated level of representation/involvement on LSBs. The Clerk also requested members to bear in mind that, as there would be one LSB per unitary authority area, it would be impractical for the Chair or Vice-Chair to be the Authority's representative on each LSB. It would also be important for the Authority's representatives to remember that, when serving on LSBs, they would be there by virtue of their position on the Fire and Rescue Authority and not as their own council's representative and should therefore, if conflicts arose, promote and protect fire and rescue authority interests. The Vice-Chairman was of the view that, contrary to the majority of current partnership bodies such as Community Safety Partnerships, it was essential that members as well as officers served on the LSBs otherwise they would be nothing more than quangos. Panel members were informed by the Chief Fire Officer that he would be looking at having a Service representative at Principal Officer level serving on each of these Boards. Following a proposal from the Vice-Chairman, which was seconded, the Panel:

Resolved: - to approve the response to the Welsh Assembly Government's consultation on 'Making the Connections – Local Service Boards in Wales' as drafted pending the inclusion of a reference to the Authority's view that it should be represented on each Local Service Board (LSB) by one of its Executive Panel members per each LSB area and that, for support purposes, each member be accompanied by a Principal Officer from the Service.

7) Urgent Matters

None.

8) Date(s) of future meetings

Following a discussion members:

Resolved: that the Executive Panel's next meeting be held at 2pm on Monday 21st May 2007. This meeting to be preceded by a meeting of the RRP Working Group. Both meetings to be held at Fire and Rescue Service Headquarters, St. Asaph.

PART II

No business.

Meeting concluded at 2.25pm.