

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

Minutes of the meeting of North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority held on Monday 21<sup>st</sup> June 2010 at Council Chamber, Guildhall, Wrexham. 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
B Blackmore	Wrexham County Borough Council
M LI Davies	Denbighshire County Council
B Dunn	Flintshire County Council
G C Evans	Denbighshire County Council
P C Evans	Conwy County Borough Council
T Evans	Wrexham County Borough Council
E C George	Wrexham County Borough Council
G James	Flintshire County Council
M Griffith	Gwynedd Council
E M Jones	Gwynedd Council
N M Jones	Flintshire County Council
W Knightly	Conwy County Borough Council
D Mackie	Flintshire County Council
A Minshull	Flintshire County Council
J V Owen	Anglesey County Council
T Roberts	Gwynedd Council
W P Roberts	Conwy County Borough Council
A Tansley	Conwy County Borough Council
G O Williams	Gwynedd Council

### **Also present:**

S A Smith (Chief Fire Officer and Chief Executive); C Everett (Clerk 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 (Senior Fire Safety Manager); G W Griffiths (Senior Operations Manager); G Brandrick (Training and Development Manager); S Morris (Corporate Planning Manager); T Williams (Corporate Communications Manager); J Brown (Finance Manager); S Forrest (Accountant, Treasurer's Department, Conwy County Borough Council); G Jones (Executive Support Manager); A Davies (Member Liaison Officer) and S Jones (Member Liaison Assistant).

### **APOLOGIES**

<b>Councillor</b>	<b>Representing</b>
D Barratt	Flintshire County Council
L W Davies	Anglesey County Council
P Jeffares	Wrexham County Borough Council
M Thomas	Conwy County Borough Council
G Williams	Denbighshire County Council

- 1 NOTICE OF URGENT MATTERS
  - 1.1 The Chair advised that no items had been submitted to the Clerk for consideration.
- 2 DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS
  - 2.1 There were no declarations of interest.
- 3 MINUTES
  - 3.1 The minutes of the Fire and Rescue Authority meeting held on 15<sup>th</sup> March 2010 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 capacity as Chair and Vice-Chair between 1<sup>st</sup> March and 18<sup>th</sup> June 2010.
  - 5.2 **RESOLVED to note the information provided.**
- 6 AERIAL LADDER PLATFORMS (ALPs)
  - 6.1 The report was presented to seek Members' endorsement of the Executive Panel's recommendation that the Authority change its attendance standard for ALPs from 20 minutes to 30 minutes and as a consequence, does not seek to replace one of the four existing special appliances.
  - 6.2 In 2006 North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority decided upon a 20 minute attendance standard for its ALPs which resulted in the maintenance of the fleet of four appliances. With the existing ALP based at Wrexham coming to the end of its fleet life in 2012, the opportunity had arisen to review the existing attendance standard.
  - 6.3 The risks involved in moving from a 20 minute to 30 minute attendance standard for ALPs were minimal because incident data showed that the ALPs were not used as a rapid response appliance. When deployed they were used in the latter stages of an incident. In only 7% of incidents (10 out of 147) had the ALP been deployed in the first 30 minutes. The Chief Fire Officer explained that should the Authority decide to keep the attendance standard of 20 minutes for ALPs, then the procurement procedure to purchase a replacement ALP would need to start immediately.

- 6.4 Cllr M LI Davies felt that it was time for the Authority to make a firm decision either way and that the recommendations in the report should be firmer. Cllr George asked for more information on the issue and whether there had been any discussion with Cheshire FRS about using their ALPs.
- 6.5 Cllr P C Evans expressed concern about the approach adopted to deal with the issue and did not feel it was satisfactory. Cllr P C Evans was of the view that the proposal not to replace the fourth ALP was a money-saving scheme and that it should be referred to the Audit Committee for discussion. However, Cllr J V Owen disagreed with this sentiment and explained that as a Member of the Executive Panel he had received extensive information on ALPs and it was clear that it was not a cost cutting exercise but rather a decision on the best way of using resources in a responsible manner.
- 6.6 In response to a question from Cllr D Mackie about officers' opinion on the issue, the Chief Fire Officer confirmed that if the attendance standard was changed to 30 minutes then it could be achieved across North Wales with 3 ALPs.
- 6.7 The Vice-Chair also commented on the Executive Panel's discussions about the issue and that the decision to bring these recommendations to the Authority had not been taken lightly. In order for the Authority to move forward, the Vice-Chair felt that it would be beneficial for non-Executive members to receive a briefing on the issue.
- 6.8 **RESOLVED to arrange a briefing for all Members to be held early in September in order that a final decision could be made at the October Authority meeting.**
- 7 2010 CONSULTATION ON COMBINED IMPROVEMENT PLAN (IP) AND RISK REDUCTION PLAN (RRP)
- 7.1 The Deputy Chief Fire Officer presented for Members' approval the draft combined 2009-12 IP and RRP as work in progress and the draft text of the associated public consultation document.
- 7.2 Fire and Rescue Authorities (FRAs) are required to prepare, publicly consult on, and publish annually an RRP/annual action and an Improvement Plan. Guidance from the Welsh Assembly Government suggested the convenience of producing one plan containing a report of the previous financial year, a summary of agreed objectives in the current year, and the improvement plan and any additional RRP objectives for the following financial year.
- 7.3 A draft combined IP and RRP had been written covering the period of 2009-2012. It incorporated unaudited provisional data for 2008-09 where available, and risk reduction objectives for April 2011 onwards, as previously reported at the meeting of 15 March 2010.
- 7.4 The text of a draft consultation document incorporating improvement and risk reduction objectives for 2011-12 and a set of proposed questions had also been prepared. The agreed contents of the consultation document were to be used as the basis of an attractive and accessible document for wide

distribution to the public and members of staff. Following the consultation period, the Executive Panel would be considering the responses and agreeing a final draft of the IP/RRP for approval by the full Authority at its October meeting. It was confirmed that both documents would be published in Welsh and English.

7.5 Cllr George felt that the Combined Improvement Plan should emphasise the Authority's insistence on collaboration and that it should be more explicit on page 48 and on page 63 of the document. The Deputy Chief Fire Officer agreed with these comments and agreed to amend the document to reflect the work with other Fire and Rescue Services across Wales as well as authorities and organisations in North Wales.

7.6 **RESOLVED to:**  
(i) **approve the content of the consultation document for publication and distribution; and**  
(ii) **endorse the proposal to make the draft Combined IP and RRP available for reference as a work in progress on the Authority's website for the duration of the 2010 consultation.**

## 8 PRESENTATION ON DRAFT PERFORMANCE FIGURES

8.1 The Corporate Planning Manager gave Members a presentation on the draft performance figures for 2009/10 which had not been audited as yet. The figures were compared to the national trend for incidents in the UK as a whole.

8.2 Of note was the following:

- a small reduction in the overall number of fires
- significant reduction in the number of primary fires
- a slight increase in secondary fires
- a slight decrease in chimney fires.

8.3 The number of incidents attended had reduced from around 6000 at the beginning of the decade to around 3,500 at the end of this period, with a sharp decrease in primary fires from 2,400 to 1,500.

8.4 There had been a small decrease in the number of dwelling fires in North Wales with the associated figures showing that the extent of damage in such fires was being contained to a minimum, with 93% of fires being contained to the room of origin, and 93% of people being able to escape unharmed and unaided by the Fire and Rescue Service. This was considered to be due to the campaign to offer fire safety advice and home fire safety checks.

8.5 Cllr Mackie asked about the deliberate fires and whether there were any plans in place to try to reduce the number. The Senior Fire Safety Manager explained that the Service worked closely with North Wales Police and the Arson Reduction Team and there had been a number of high profile cases in the last 12 months with some offenders being imprisoned. The partnership work was on-going.

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

## 9 TREASURY MANAGEMENT

9.1 The Treasurer presented the annual treasury report which was a requirement of the Authority's reporting procedures and included the treasury activity for 2009-2010. The report also covered the actual Prudential Indicators for 2009-2010 in accordance with the requirements of the Prudential Code.

### 9.2 **RESOLVED to**

- (i) approve the actual 2009-2010 Prudential Indicators; and**
- (ii) note the report on the Treasury Management activities for 2009-2010.**

## 10 FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE 2009-2010

10.1 The Treasurer presented the review of the financial performance of the Authority for 2009-10. Due to changes in the legislation it was also requested that the Fire and Rescue Authority delegate responsibility for the approval of the audited Statement of Accounts to the Audit Committee.

10.2 In 2008-09 a Provision was set aside to cover pension back pay due to incorrect payments, discovered when the administration of the scheme was transferred to Carmarthenshire. In 2009-10 the pension back pay was paid from the revenue account so this Provision was no longer needed. The balance on this Provision had now been transferred in to the Retained Back Pay Provision.

10.3 Negotiations on the back pay for retained firefighters were continuing but based on the latest developments an estimate had been made of the costs to the Authority. The costs were expected to be between £600k and £700k. The Retained Back Pay Provision had been increased to £506k to cover some of this liability and the remainder of the costs would have to be found from savings in the revenue budget in 2010-11.

10.4 Cllr M LI Davies asked when discussions would start on the budget for 2011-12. It was confirmed that financial planning discussions would take place during the summer between the Chief Fire Officer, Clerk and Treasurer with an initial report being submitted to the Executive Panel in September and the full Authority in October.

10.5 The Treasurer thanked Sandra Forrest and Julie Brown for their hard work in finalising the accounts.

### 10.6 **RESOLVED to**

- (i) approve the transfer of the underspend to Reserves and Provisions;**
- (ii) delegate responsibility for the approval of the audited Statement of Accounts to the Audit Committee.**

## 11 ANNUAL REPORT OF BAD DEBTS WRITTEN OFF

11.1 The report was presented to inform Members that the Service had written off bad debts totalling £663.22 between 1<sup>st</sup> April 2009 and 31<sup>st</sup> March 2010.

11.2 **RESOLVED to note the information.**

## 12 HOME FIRE SAFETY CHECKS

- 12.1 The report was presented to inform Members that 32,802 home fire safety checks (HFSCs) had been carried out by North Wales Fire and Rescue Service in the financial year 2009/2010. The report also detailed key improvements to the Service.
- 12.2 The Vice-Chair congratulated officers on the HFSC achievement and applauded the work being done within community fire safety. The Chief Fire Officer informed Members that this would be an important issue for the Authority over the coming years and that it was important to remember that community fire safety work was front-line work and invaluable.
- 12.3 The Clerk congratulated the Senior Fire Safety Manager and his colleagues on the work that had been done on the Information Sharing Protocol with Local Authorities. The Clerk advised that Members could obtain further information from their Authorities about the protocol.
- 12.4 **RESOLVED to note**
- (i) **the achievement of the Service in exceeding the Fire Authority target for home fire safety checks and the increase in the numbers of completed checks;**
  - (ii) **that additional funding was not expected to be available this year;**
  - (iii) **the increase in HFSCs being delivered by front-line practitioners, funded from re-allocating the ALP posts, which had allowed whole time and day crewed watches targets to be reduced;**
  - (iv) **that the Service was evaluating all activities and events to ensure attendance was only made to events where quality referrals could be collated.**

## 13 COMPLAINTS AND LETTERS OF APPRECIATION

- 13.1 The report was presented to inform and update Members in respect of the number of complaints and letters of appreciation received from the public between April 2009 and March 2010.
- 13.2 31 complaints had been received but only 10 complaints were substantiated. 76 expressions of appreciation had been received which related to a wide range of activities undertaken by the Fire and Rescue Service.
- 13.3 Cllr P C Evans felt the low number of complaints was a credit to the Service and that the Authority's appreciation to all staff should be put on record. He felt that relative to the number of incidents and activities undertaken by the Service, the number was reassuringly low.
- 13.4 **RESOLVED to note the number of complaints and expressions of appreciation received.**

## 14 APPOINTMENT OF AN INDEPENDENT MEMBER TO THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE

- 14.1 The report was presented to ask the Authority to nominate four Members to interview and select a new independent member for the Standards Committee. In addition, Members were requested to agree that the

appointment of a lay member should be delegated to the Chair, Chief Fire Officer and Clerk.

14.2 The Clerk explained that due to family ill-health, the Vice-Chair of the Committee had resigned. The post had been advertised and six applications had been received.

14.3 **RESOLVED to**

- (i) **appoint Cllr P C Evans, Cllr E C George, Cllr J V Owen and Cllr W P Roberts to the interview and selection panel;**
- (ii) **agree that the appointment of the lay panel member for the panel should be delegated to the Chair, Chief Fire Officer and the Clerk.**

15 MEMBER REMUNERATION SCHEME – CARE ALLOWANCE AND INDEPENDENT MEMBERS

15.1 The report was presented for Members to consider an appropriate amount of Care Allowance to be paid to eligible members and consider a request from the Standards Committee to pay an appropriate allowance to Independent Members.

15.2 The Authority had agreed to pay a care allowance to Members in 2009; however, the amount to be paid had not been agreed. It was confirmed that written evidence would be required before payment would be made.

15.3 At the Authority meeting on 16<sup>th</sup> March 2009, Members had refused the proposal to pay an allowance to independent members. The Clerk explained that the Standards Committee now had a work programme and would be meeting approximately three times a year. Cllr P C Evans proposed option 2 in the report which was agreed by all Members.

15.4 **RESOLVED to**

- (i) **pay a care allowance of up to £100 per month to eligible members with effect from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2009; and**
- (ii) **agree to pay an allowance of £362.50 per annum for the Chair of the Standards Committee and £190 for other independent members with effect from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2010.**

16 MINUTES OF MEETINGS

16.1 The minutes of the following meetings were presented for information to the Authority:

- Executive Panel meeting held on 10<sup>th</sup> May 2010 (unconfirmed)
- Standards Committee meeting held on 4<sup>th</sup> May 2010 (unconfirmed)
- Audit Committee meeting held on 1<sup>st</sup> March 2010 (confirmed)

16.2 **RESOLVED to note the minutes.**

17 INFORMATIVE

17.1 ACFO Hanks presented the Informative to the Authority.

17.2 **RESOLVED to accept the Informative magazine.**