

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

Minutes of the meeting of North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority held on Monday 15 December 2014 at Flintshire County Council Chamber, Mold. Meeting commenced at 10.00am.

### **PRESENT**

#### **Councillor**

M LI Davies (Chair)  
P R Lewis (Deputy Chair)  
A I Dunbar  
B Dunn  
R J Dutton  
A Evans  
J G Evans  
R O Jones  
G Lowe  
D MacRae  
D J Miles  
H McGuill  
P Owen  
M A Reece  
W P Shotton  
J R Skelland  
W O Thomas  
G G Williams  
R Wright

#### **Representing**

Denbighshire County Council  
Conwy County Borough Council  
Flintshire County Council  
Flintshire County Council  
Wrexham County Borough Council  
Wrexham County Borough Council  
Anglesey County Council  
Anglesey County Council  
Wrexham County Borough Council  
Conwy County Borough Council  
Conwy County Borough Council  
Flintshire County Council  
Denbighshire County Council  
Flintshire County Council  
Flintshire County Council  
Wrexham County Borough Council  
Flintshire County Council  
Gwynedd Council  
Gwynedd Council

### **Also present:**

S A Smith (Chief Fire Officer and Chief Executive); K W Finch (Treasurer to the Authority); C Everett (Clerk and Monitoring Officer); D Docx (Deputy Chief Fire Officer); R Simmons and R Fairhead (Assistant Chief Fire Officers); G W Griffiths (Training and Development Manager); G Brandrick (Senior Fire Safety Manager); K Roberts (Senior Operations Manager); L Roberts (Senior Control and Business Continuity Manager); S Morris (Corporate Planning Manager); T Williams (Corporate Communications Manager); S Forrest (Accountant, Treasurer's Department, Conwy County Borough Council); A Davies (Member Liaison Officer) and S Jones (Member Liaison Assistant).

### **APOLOGIES**

Cllr L W Davies	Anglesey County Council
Cllr A Tansley	Conwy County Borough Council
Cllr R Davies	Denbighshire County Council
Cllr C Hughes	Gwynedd Council
Cllr W R Owen	Gwynedd Council
Cllr W T Owen	Gwynedd Council
Cllr R E Parry	Conwy County Borough Council
S Millington	Area Manager

1 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

1.1 There were no declarations of interest.

2 MINUTES OF THE MEETINGS HELD ON 22 SEPTEMBER AND 2 DECEMBER 2014

2.1 The minutes of the Fire and Rescue Authority meeting held on 22 September 2014 were submitted for approval.

2.2 The minutes of the Fire and Rescue Authority extraordinary meeting held on 2 December 2014 were submitted for approval.

2.3 **RESOLVED to approve minutes of both meetings as a true and correct record.**

3 MATTERS ARISING

3.1 The following matters arose from the minutes of the meeting held on 22 September 2014

3.2 13.3 – Devolution, Democracy and Delivery White Paper – Reforming Local Government – the DCFO had contacted the FBU secretary and he had confirmed that FBU had no comments to be added to the Authority's response to the white paper.

3.3 14.4 (ii) Industrial Action Costs – the Clerk confirmed that he was due to meet with the DCFO to resolve some issues prior to sending a letter to the Welsh Government about the costs related to the military assistance training. A further update will be provided at the next meeting.

3.4 There were no matters arising from the minutes of the meeting held on 2 December 2014.

4 URGENT MATTERS

4.1 There were no urgent matters.

5 CHAIR'S REPORT

5.1 The report listed meetings and events attended by Cllr M Ll Davies and Cllr P R Lewis in their roles of Chair and Deputy Chair of North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority between September and December 2014.

5.2 On Friday 12 December 2014, the Chair had attended the Graduation Ceremony of two members of staff who had successfully completed the Executive Leadership course. The Chair asked members to join him in congratulating G Brandrick, Senior Fire Safety Manager and S Morris, Corporate Planning Manager on their achievement.

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

## 6 DRAFT BUDGET 2015-16

- 6.1 The draft budget for 2015-16 was presented to Members for approval. The report contained proposals to the Authority in respect of the draft budget for 2015-16, the forecasts for 2016-17 and 2017-18, provisional contributions required by the constituent authorities and the draft capital programme.
- 6.2 The Treasurer led members through the report and appendices. He asked members to note the Authority's current position with regard to reserves. It is currently estimated that only £20k of the £406k from reserves will be utilised in 2014-15 to underpin the budget, however, should there be an increase in activity before the end of March 2015 this could change. The Treasurer reiterated his advice that extreme caution should be applied when considering the use of reserves to underpin the budget as the effect is to increase budget pressures by that amount in the subsequent year.
- 6.3 Cllr Shotton recognised the hard work involved in drafting the budget. He proposed that the Authority set a frozen budget with contributions from reserves in addition to making the savings agreed at the extraordinary meeting. This was seconded by Cllr Dunbar.
- 6.4 The Deputy Chair, Cllr Lewis, put forward an amendment to Cllr's Shotton proposal. Acknowledging the situation of local authorities and the financial pressures across the board, Cllr Lewis was of the view that the Authority will be facing a similar situation in 12 months' time and that there will be continuing constraints on local authorities' budget for years to come. Cllr Lewis' proposal was to reduce the level of reserves to 5% of the annual revenue budget, which would release approximately £223k to be used to underpin the budget for 2015-16 this would then leave an additional £114k to be levied from local authorities rather than the first option of £337k as detailed in appendix B. The increase would therefore equate to 16 pence per head of population in North Wales.
- 6.5 In response to a Member's question it was confirmed that the population figures are detailed in the Welsh Government's green book which is used as a basis for distribution of RSG and other financial settlements for Local Authorities. Another Member questioned whether the reduction in fuel cost could be taken into consideration for next year's budget, however, it was confirmed that the reduction may not be long term and that it was best to increase the budget by £3k for 2015-16 and reconsider the position for the following year should the price reduction still be in place.
- 6.6 Cllr Wright seconded Cllr Lewis' proposal and felt that 16 pence would be acceptable to constituents and would also give the Authority more time to consider future savings. Cllr Skelland felt that the Authority should be reviewing locations of stations across North Wales in order to make savings in the future. The CFO confirmed that the Improvement Planning Working Group will be receiving a comprehensive analysis of fire cover in North Wales and thereafter may consider and review locations of stations.

6.7 Following a vote, 16 members were in favour of accepting the proposal as set out by Cllr Lewis. Cllr Shotton, Dunbar and Reece abstained from this vote. This was in relation to **recommendation (ii) of the report, the final details agreed were as follows:**

- (ii) **the strategy to be followed to achieve a balanced budget for 2015-16:-**
- **the Budget is set at £31,885,843**
  - **this includes savings of £291,000 and a contribution from reserves of £223,357**
  - **the increase to be met by the constituent authorities is £113,832**
  - **the revised figures approved under Appendix B are as follows:**

<b>Authority</b>	<b>Contribution 2014/2015 £</b>	<b>Population Estimates 2015</b>	<b>2015/2016 Proposed Contribution £</b>	<b>Actual Change £</b>	<b>% Change</b>
<b>Conwy</b> County Borough Council	5,283,704	115,909	5,289,891	6,188	0.12%
<b>Anglesey</b> County Council	3,198,669	70,128	3,200,523	1,854	0.06%
<b>Gwynedd</b> Council	5,588,255	122,765	5,602,787	14,532	0.26%
<b>Denbighshire</b> County Council	4,342,155	95,550	4,360,740	18,585	0.43%
<b>Flintshire</b> County Council	7,018,721	154,115	7,033,548	14,827	0.21%
<b>Wrexham</b> County Borough Council	6,340,507	140,197	6,398,354	57,847	0.91%
<b>TOTAL</b>	31,772,011	698,664	31,885,843	113,832	0

6.8 **It was further RESOLVED to**

- (i) **approve the draft budget for 2015-16;**
- (iii) **note the budget position for 2016-17 and 2017-18;**
- (iv) **advise constituent authorities of the provisional contributions required for 2015-16 based on (ii) above;**
- (v) **approve the draft capital programme and associated methods of financing for 2015-16;**
- (vi) **agree that should any savings transpire before 15 February 2015 the powers for altering the budget level be delegated to the Treasurer in consultation with the Chair, Chief Fire Officer and Clerk.**

At this point the CFO left the meeting.

## 7 PROVISIONAL OUTTURN 2014-15

7.1 The Treasurer presented the report which informed Members about the estimated provisional outturn for the financial year 2014-15.

7.2 The report indicated that the Authority would have an underspend of approximately £311k. However, the Treasurer stated that the latest indications showed that there would be a potentially higher underspend which Members were asked to approve for capital use, therefore lessening any increase in the revenue budget in future years.

7.3 It was noted that the Executive Panel members were informed at their last meeting about the potential risks and costs associated with the new national contract for radio communication. Risks included timescales for transition not being met and that Welsh Government may not continue to partially fund the system when the existing contract ends in December 2016. Members were therefore recommended to set aside £300k of the underspend to cover the additional costs incurred during the transition from one communications contract to another. Cllr McGuill felt that the Authority should not be penalised in having to renegotiate extensions of contracts because of a national government's delay in introducing the new contract. The DCFO confirmed that the Welsh Government is aware of the issue but that it would be prudent for the Authority to have money set aside in case it is not resolved in another way.

7.4 **RESOLVED to**  
**(i) note the estimated underspend of £311k; and**  
**(ii) agree to set £300k of this underspend aside to cover any additional costs associated with the change in radio provider.**

## 8 GOVERNANCE OF THE SAFER COMMUNITIES BOARD

8.1 The Clerk presented the report which informed members of the governance arrangements for the Safer Communities Board. It had been agreed that the board would be formally constituted as an advisory committee. The report detailed the tasks that the Board will undertake as well as the Board's forward work plan.

8.2 The Clerk explained that the Senior Fire Safety Manager, G Brandrick, represents NWFRS on the Board and that there is an opportunity for the Authority to also have representation on the Board. However, members were of the opinion that this was not required. Some members also expressed concerns that there were no outcomes mentioned in the forward work plan but it was confirmed that the Board will have a robust monitoring framework in place.

8.3 **RESOLVED to note the contents of the report and the forward work plan as presented.**

## 9 APPOINTMENTS TO EXTERNAL BODIES

9.1 The Clerk presented the report which asked Members to:  
**(i) appoint an Authority member to the Ambulance Fire Service Resource Centre Project Board;**  
**(ii) confirm the appointment of an additional member to the Local Pension Board.**

9.2 **RESOLVED to endorse the appointments of:**  
**(i) Cllr G Lowe onto the Ambulance Fire Service Resource Centre Project Board and thank Cllr McGuill for attending meetings since November 2013;**  
**(ii) Cllr D MacRae onto the Local Pension Board.**

- 10 EXECUTIVE PANEL: AMENDMENTS TO TERMS OF REFERENCE
- 10.1 The report was presented to ask Members to approve the Executive Panel's terms of reference amended in order to reflect the changes introduced by the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2009.
- 10.2 **RESOLVED to approve the amended terms of reference for the Executive Panel.**
- 11 APPOINTMENT OF INDEPENDENT MEMBER OF STANDARDS COMMITTEE
- 11.1 The Clerk introduced the report which proposed that David Morris be reappointed as an independent member to the Authority's Standards Committee for a further period of four years. Mr Morris has served one term of four years and is eligible for reappointment for a maximum of one further term of up to four years. Mr Morris has indicated that he is willing to be reappointed.
- 11.2 **RESOLVED to reappoint David Morris as an independent member of the Standards Committee with effect from September 2014 for a term of four years.**
- 12 MEETING DATES 2015
- 12.1 The report was presented to inform Members of the dates for meetings of the Fire and Rescue Authority, Executive Panel and Audit Committee for 2015.
- 12.2 Cllr J G Evans proposed that the December 2015 meeting be held a week earlier on 14 December and this was agreed by all present.
- 12.3 **RESOLVED to note dates of meetings as follows:**
- Fire and Rescue Authority meetings**  
Monday 16 March 2015 – Wrexham  
Monday 15 June 2015 – Conwy  
Monday 21 September 2015 – Gwynedd  
Monday 14 December 2015 – Flintshire
- Executive Panel meetings to be held 10am at Fire and Rescue Headquarters**  
Monday 2 February 2015  
Monday 11 May 2015  
Monday 20 July 2015  
Monday 26 October 2015
- Audit Committee meetings to be held 2pm at Fire and Rescue Headquarters**  
Monday 26 January 2015  
Monday 1 June 2015  
Monday 14 September 2015

### 13 STRATEGIC EQUALITY PLAN ANNUAL REPORT

- 13.1 Members were asked to approve the Strategic Equality Plan annual report produced in response to the requirements of the Equality Act 2010 (Statutory Duties) (Wales) Regulations 2011.
- 13.2 ACFO Simmons introduced the report and explained that this was the Authority's third annual report covering the reporting year 2013-2014; it set out the Authority's on-going commitment to ensuring respect and fairness for the residents, elected members, staff members and all visitors to the North Wales area.
- 13.3 There has been an increased effort to collect relevant equality information in relation to incidents attended which has resulted in a post-incident system being established to collect service delivery equality data. Information collated from home fire safety checks undertaken has helped inform and influence the delivery of community safety activity.
- 13.4 It was noted that the Arson Reduction Team provides training to new police officers and PCSOs to highlight the use of arson and deliberate fire setting in hate related crime and this is now considered an essential part of the police induction training.
- 13.5 Another key aspect is the public engagement and consultation. In order to improve coordination and engagement consistency across North Wales, a new public engagement strategy has been put in place. In 2013 more protected groups were asked to give feedback on the Service's work and this has enabled the Service to share the information collated across all departments in order to coordinate future performance objectives.
- 13.6 It was noted that the employment data gathered during recruitment campaigns was sparser during 2013-14 as the recruitment campaigns had been held outside the reporting period of this report.
- 13.7 In response to a member's question about the collaboration across Wales, ACFO Simmons confirmed that there is one individual in each of the three FRs in Wales that monitor and ensure compliance with the Equality Act. However, each Service is also required to consult with its local communities and therefore there are aspects that are unique to each Service. It was also noted that all the data is stored and used throughout the year for various purposes. Cllr Lewis commented that the amount of information was enlightening and may be useful for the Authority in its future planning.
- 13.8 **RESOLVED to thank the officers for their work and note the contents of the Strategic Equality Plan Annual Report 2013-2014 and approve its publication on the Service's website.**

## 14 MINUTES OF MEETINGS

14.1 The minutes of the following meetings were submitted for information:

- Audit Committee meeting held on 15 September 2014
- Executive Panel meeting held on 27 October 2014.

14.2 **RESOLVED to note the minutes for information.**

PART II - Pursuant to Section 100A (4) of the Local Government Act, 1972, the press and public were asked to leave the meeting during consideration of the following item(s) of business because it is likely that there would be disclosed to them exempt information as defined in Paragraph(s) 12 to 18 of Part 4 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.

## 15 CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2014/15

15. The report provided Members with an update on the Authority's estate capital programme.

15.2 Members noted the following:

- Wrexham fire and ambulance station – enabling works have started but the project completion date has been revised to January 2016. Monthly meetings are held to monitor progress and costs.
- Nefyn fire and police station - anticipated that it will be fully operational in April 2015.
- Tywyn fire and police station - proposed to commence construction works in January 2015.
- Deeside fire station – the project has been retendered and the works have recommenced with a completion date scheduled for Autumn 2015.
- DDA and equality compliance works to Headquarters, Llanrwst fire station and the community safety office in Rhyl have been completed satisfactorily.
- Planned maintenance and minor works – all work planned will be completed by March 2015.

15.3 **RESOLVED to note the contents of the report.**

## 16 INDUSTRIAL ACTION

16.1 The DCFO informed members that there had been no industrial action in Wales since August. The WG was currently consulting on new pension proposals and members will be kept informed of the outcome.

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

The Chair closed the meeting by thanking all officers, the unions and Authority members for their work and co-operation throughout the year. He also wished everyone a peaceful Christmas and a Happy New Year.