

NORTH WALES FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY

Minutes of the Executive Panel Meeting of the North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority held on 22nd September at the Rhyl Community Fire Station. Meeting commenced at 1.30pm.

PRESENT

Cllr T Roberts (Chairman)	Gwynedd Council
Cllr S Frobisher (Vice-Chairman)	Denbighshire County Council
Cllr M Ll Davies	Denbighshire County Council
Cllr B Dunn	Flintshire County Council
Cllr G C Evans	Denbighshire County Council
Cllr P Jeffares	Wrexham County Borough Council
Cllr A M Jones	Anglesey County Council
Cllr E Morgan Jones	Gwynedd Council
Cllr J V Owen	Anglesey County Council

OBSERVING:

Cllr B Blackmore	Wrexham County Council
Cllr A Tansley	Conwy County Borough Council

ALSO PRESENT:

S A Smith (Chief Fire Officer and Chief Executive); K Finch (Treasurer); C Hanks (Deputy Chief Fire Officer); P S Claydon (Assistant Chief Fire Officer, Operational Assurance); D Docx (Assistant Chief Officer, Resources); R Simmons (Assistant Chief Officer, Organisational and People Development); R Fairhead (Senior Fire Safety Manager); B Murphy (Senior Operations Manager); G Brandrick (Service Development Manager); T Williams (Corporate Communications Manager); S Morris (Corporate Planning Manager); S Forrest (Accountant, Treasurer's Department, Conwy County Borough Council); Sian Jones (Members Liaison Assistant); A Davies (Member Liaison Officer Designate).

Apologies:

Cllr T Evans	Wrexham County Borough Council
Cllr W P Roberts	Conwy County Borough Council
Cllr M Thomas	Conwy County Borough Council
C Everett	Clerk and Monitoring Officer

The Chair informed members that the Clerk/Monitoring Officer was unable to attend. The Clerk had indicated to the Chairman that in his opinion there was unlikely to be any issue on the agenda which would require the monitoring officer's advice.

1 NOTICE OF URGENT MATTERS

- 1.1 No urgent items had been submitted to the Chairman for consideration.

2 MINUTES OF LAST MEETING

- 2.1 The minutes of the meeting held on 28th July 2008 were approved as a true and correct record of proceedings subject to amending the amount collected for Hope House charity from a cricket match which should read £1,400 (under part II of the minutes).

3 MATTERS ARISING

- 3.1 Constitutional Review – the Clerk and Chief Fire Officer had carried out individual pieces of research and are due to meet soon to discuss. A working draft will be available for members thereafter. Any member wishing to contribute to the review should email the Clerk or the Chief Fire Officer. It was agreed that the Treasurer would be part of the consultation.

4 RESPONSE TO THE CONSULTATION ON THE AUTHORITY'S DRAFT RISK REDUCTION PLAN (RRP) ACTION PLAN 2009-10

- 4.1 The paper was presented to inform Members of responses received to the consultation on the Authority's RRP Action Plan 2009-10; to seek a recommendation to the full Fire and Rescue Authority in relation to the Action Plan; and to agree the wording of the Authority's response to the issues raised.
- 4.2 The RRP Working Group had discussed and considered the responses received in relation to the RRP Action Plan consultation. Below are the proposed recommendations to the full Fire Authority:
- 4.3 To progress the Officer cover Review in order to provide resources for an operational assurance team and community safety work.
- 4.4 To progress the review of crewing of Ariel Ladder Platforms (ALPs) and when the opportunity arises due to transfer the funding of the dedicated posts to fund more community safety practitioners on the most appropriate conditions to meet the Authority's objectives.
- 4.5 It was agreed that the catering arrangements were a management issue and that this proposal should be deleted from the RRP Action Plan.
- 4.6 To undertake a fundamental review into Risk across North Wales in order to produce the full Risk Reduction Plan in 2009/10.

- 4.7 **MEMBERS RESOLVED TO:**
- (i) note the 13 consultation responses received;**
 - (ii) propose the above recommendations to the full Fire Authority;**
 - (iii) agree the wording of the Authority's response to the issues raised.**
- 5 AUDIT OF FINANCIAL STATEMENTS 2007/08 (WAO) AND LETTER OF REPRESENTATION (TREASURER)
- 5.1 The paper was presented to receive the accounts which have now been audited by the Auditor appointed by the Wales Audit Office. They have been amended in line with the findings from the audit and subsequent discussions over the accounting treatment, definitions and presentation of specific items within the accounts.
- 5.2 The auditor had sought legal advice in relation to reserves and it was confirmed that Fire and Rescue Authorities do not have authority to hold reserves. Discussions are currently being held in relation to the provisions listed on page 6 of the WAO report. Although technical changes need to be made, it was confirmed that the net underspend will not be affected.
- 5.3 The auditor thanked Sandra Forrest, Dawn Docx and their teams for all their help.
- 5.4 In response to a question from Members, it was noted that the Auditor General commissions the procurement for audit services and some of the work has to be awarded to firms in the private sector.
- 5.5 The Treasurer asked Members to note paragraphs 3 (a) – (g) of the covering paper.
- 5.6 **MEMBERS RESOLVED TO:**
- (i) note the amended statement of accounts for 2007-08;**
 - (ii) acknowledge the letter of representation sent to the external auditor, AND agreed that the Treasurer could amend it as required following discussion with the auditors;**
 - (iii) agree that the Treasurer, in consultation with the Chief Fire Officer and Clerk, could agree the presentational amendments to the accounts following discussions with the auditors KPMG.**
- 6 BUDGET PROSPECTS FOR 2009/10
- 6.1 The paper was presented to inform Members of the significant known budget pressures for 2009/10 and beyond. It is not possible for all pressures to be quantified at this stage, but where possible they have been included to produce an indicative budget for next year. Based on what is currently known, an increase of 5.49% would be required and this has to be considered in light of a RSG settlement which could

possibly be in the range of 2%. There is also an expectation that efficiency savings of 1% will be made.

- 6.2 The Assistant Chief Officer (Resources) led members through the paper and highlighted the following:
- 6.3 Firelink – replacement radio system to be on-stream in September 2009 at a cost of £350k for 6 months. Discussions being held with the WAG in relation to funding arrangements for the first year.
- 6.4 New Dimensions/ Long Term Capability – the appliances and equipment are currently owned by WAG as part of the national resilience arrangements but if ownership were to be transferred to the Fire and Rescue Authorities, maintenance costs would fall to Fire and Rescue Authorities. A Member expressed concern and felt that the Chair and Chief Officer in conjunction with other Authorities in Wales should write to the WAG stating that if appliances are transferred to the Authority that the WAG should pay the maintenance costs.
- 6.5 Job evaluation exercise currently being undertaken. Noted that the process is not bound by national guidelines. Once the process has been concluded the pay bands will be considered. Further information on the cost implications will be available in December when posts start to be mapped and better information will be available.
- 6.6 In relation to pay awards, it was noted in the paper that government direction was that pay awards should be restricted to 2%. A Member considered that the revenue support grant settlement was more likely to be 1.5% than 2% referred to in the paper.
- 6.7 **Members noted the information presented in the paper.**

7 CHIEF FIRE OFFICERS TASK GROUP REPORT

- 7.1 Richard Fairhead gave a presentation on the above for the benefit of new Members. The task group report will be provided to all new members.
- 7.2 Following the presentation, members raised the following issues:
- 7.3 RIP cigarettes - it was noted that the European Union is taking this issue forward. However, members were reminded that people's lifestyles are the cause of a lot of the deaths and that the Authority can only mitigate dangers to a certain extent.
- 7.4 The Deputy Chief Fire Officer met with the Regional Director of National Public Health Service to explore further partnership opportunities with regard to smoking cessation strategies involving young people.

7.5 **Members noted the presentation.**

8 WELSH LANGUAGE SCHEME AND LINGUISTIC SKILLS STRATEGY

8.1 The paper was presented to inform members of new developments and progress on promoting the use of the Welsh language within North Wales Fire and Rescue Service.

8.2 The Authority's Welsh Language policy is monitored and audited by the Welsh Language Board. The skills strategy measures skills of individuals and considers the skills needed for the roles, measures the gap and a plan is then put in place. It is part of a long term project to increase the number of Welsh speakers in the Service.

8.3 It was noted that Level 1 is about appreciating the Welsh language and being able to pronounce names and place names properly and using Welsh greetings. Level 3 is similar to a GCSE level.

8.4 Members congratulated officers on the strategy and for recognising that speaking/writing Welsh is an additional skill.

8.5 **Members resolved to endorse and support the strategy.**

9 PERFORMANCE MONITORING

9.1 The paper was presented to provide members with information relating to the Service's activity and performance.

9.2 The following points were highlighted:

- (i) total calls up due to Control staff working with the Welsh Ambulance Service and mobilising appliances to more road traffic collisions, increasing speed of attendance to road traffic collisions;
- (ii) year on year increase in number of working smoke alarms due to home safety checks undertaken by NWFRS;
- (iii) malicious and false alarms – fewer calls received because when calls are made they are challenged resulting in far fewer attendances.

9.3 It was noted that the control room's move to Crud y Dderwen is imminent and this will ensure better collaboration between the police and the FRS and expedite the process of dealing with emergency calls that require more than one emergency service.

9.4 **Members noted the contents of the performance monitoring report.**

10 FIRE & RESCUE NATIONAL FRAMEWORK FOR WALES 2008-2011

10.1 The paper was presented to inform Members that the above Framework has now been published by the WAG.

10.2 The Chief Fire Officer informed Members that an independent Fire and Rescue Adviser is to be appointed to the Welsh Assembly.

10.3 Members had attended a seminar in Brecon recently and felt that the Assembly was trying to create another level of bureaucracy and meetings. However, members felt that more partnership working was needed with Local Service Boards.

10.4 **Members noted the publication of the Framework and those revisions to the draft document as outlined in the covering paper.**

11 MEMBERSHIP OF WORKING GROUPS

11.1 Nominations from the NWFRA were requested for membership of the:

- (i) Members' Support and Development and Community Safety Champions' Working Group – **each Local Authority to nominate one representative;**
- (ii) Fire Cover and Risk Review – **resolved at the RRP Working Group for the following to be part of the group M Ll Davies, G C Evans, P Jeffares, A M Jones, E Morgan Jones, J V Owen and B Roberts - and ask Flintshire to nominate a representative;** and
- (iii) Strategic Partnership Group – **members nominated the vice-chairman to represent the Authority on this group.**

PART II

12 PRESENTATION ON CONTINGENCY ARRANGEMENTS IN THE EVENT OF SEVERE DISRUPTIONS

12.1 Paul Claydon presented information regarding the national project that has been in development for some time and now required some decisions from the FRA.

12.2 A Tender process had been carried out to invite organisations to bid for the opportunity to provide fire services in the event of a severe disruption. The process is at a point where one of three providers have been identified as the preferred tenderer, however, it was now a decision for FRAs whether they want to continue with the project or explore other avenues.

- 12.3 The Chief Fire Officer had discussed the issue with WAG and further discussions are due to be held with the Minister. National Governments current position is that the project does not represent a new burden and no additional funding would be provided.
- 12.4 Members expressed serious concerns about the project and felt that this issue needed to be raised with the Department for Communities and Local Government in conjunction with the other Fire and Rescue Authorities.
- 12.5 Members recognised that a local plan needed to be in place to protect the people of North Wales.
- 12.6 A Member requested that via the LGA, as it is a UK matter, a meeting is requested with the Secretary of State and if that request is unsuccessful, then the Authority may consider bringing the matter to the public domain.
- 12.7 A meeting of all UK Authorities was due to be held on 10th October and the Chair and Chief Fire Officer will have more information regarding other authorities' views following that meeting. Chief Officers will work with the WLGA to ensure it is discussed at future meetings.
- 12.8 **Members resolved not to proceed with the project.**

The meeting concluded at 4.40pm.