

**NORTH WALES FIRE AUTHORITY**

These are the minutes of the North Wales Fire Authority's meeting held on Monday 20<sup>th</sup> September 2004 at the Council Chamber, The Guildhall, Wrexham. Meeting commenced at 10:30am

**Present:**

Councillor

Representing

T Roberts (Chairman)  
M Williams (Vice-Chairman)

Gwynedd Council  
Wrexham County Borough Council

D D Millar  
G C Evans  
S Frobisher  
D Jones MBE  
J A Smith  
J B Attridge (substitute)  
D Clayton  
E F Evans  
R G Hampson  
J Ovens  
C Shone  
M Griffith  
E Morgan Jones  
W T Owen  
G O Williams  
E C George  
N S Colbourne  
P M Shone  
J A Roberts  
W T Roberts

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

**Also present:**

S A Smith (Chief Fire Officer and Chief Executive); J Kennedy (Deputy Monitoring Officer to the Authority); K W Finch (Treasurer to the Authority); C Enness (Deputy Chief Fire Officer); C Hanks (Assistant Chief Fire Officer, Service Support); P S Claydon (Assistant Chief Fire Officer, Service Delivery); P L Slee (Assistant Chief Officer, Corporate Services), S Morris (Projects Officer); S Forrest (Treasurer's Department, Conwy County Borough Council) and Rh Evans (Member Liaison Officer).

## **PART I**

### **1) Apologies**

#### Councillor

#### Representing

P C Evans JP  
S C Jones  
W E Jones  
J M Vaughan  
D Barratt  
G M Craddock  
W J Chorlton

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

I R Miller

Clerk and Monitoring Officer to the Authority

### **2) Notice of Urgent Matters**

The Chairman advised that no items had been submitted to the Clerk or him for consideration.

### **3) Chairman's Announcements**

- i. Councillor J A Roberts was congratulated on being elected the Chairman of Ynys Môn County Council for the 2004/05 municipal year.
- ii. The Authority's best wishes were conveyed to Councillor W T Owen following his recent short stay in hospital and to Councillor Gwilym O Williams who also had not been very well lately. Both were welcomed to the meeting.
- iii. Members were advised that they should all now be in possession of the various Authority information documents, as detailed in the Members Liaison Officer's letter dated 13<sup>th</sup> September. Any member who did not possess all the listed documents was asked to contact the Member Liaison Officer in order that arrangements may be made for the documents to be forwarded to them.
- iv. An induction day for new Fire Authority members was to be held on Wednesday 29<sup>th</sup> September 2004 at Fire and Rescue Service Headquarters, Rhyl at 10am. Although the original intention had been for all Fire Authority members to attend, owing to the numbers involved and the scheduled programme for the event, attendance had been restricted to new members only.
- v. Following the meeting members were invited to join the Chairman, Vice-Chairman and Officers at a presentation ceremony, to be held at Wrexham Fire Station, at which the surplus fire appliance that the Authority had resolved to donate to the International Fire & Rescue Association for use in Bosnia would be officially handed over.

- vi. Future Committee meetings were scheduled to be held on the following dates: Executive Panel would meet on 18<sup>th</sup> October 2004 and the Best Value Committee would hold its next meeting on 11<sup>th</sup> November 2004, both meetings were to be held at Fire & Rescue Service Headquarters, Rhyl at 10am. The next Fire Authority meeting was scheduled for 20<sup>th</sup> December 2004 at 10:30am, the venue being Ynys Môn County Council Headquarters, Llangefni.
- vii. Congratulations were extended to the Authority's Treasurer, Mr Ken Finch, who had celebrated a 'special' birthday on 18<sup>th</sup> September 2004.

The Vice-Chairman extended the Authority's congratulations to the Chairman who had also celebrated a 'milestone' birthday on 17<sup>th</sup> September 2004.

#### **4) Minutes**

The following minutes were submitted:

- i. Fire Authority meeting held on 19<sup>th</sup> July 2004

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

The following minutes were submitted for information purposes:

- ii. Best Value Committee held on 26<sup>th</sup> August 2004
- iii. Executive Panel meeting held on 26<sup>th</sup> August 2004

#### **5) Matters Arising**

No matters arose from the minutes submitted. Councillor E F Evans drew members' attention to the fact that item 4(i), in English, on the business agenda for this meeting stated that the minutes submitted for approval incorrectly stated the meeting to have been held on 20<sup>th</sup> July 2004 instead of the 19<sup>th</sup> July 2004. The error was noted.

#### **6) Chairman's Report**

The Chairman introduced his reported (distributed at the meeting) which provided members with a brief update on the meetings and events attended by him, in his capacity as Chairman, since the Fire Authority's last meeting on 19<sup>th</sup> July 2004. He then proceeded to detail the events and the activities, listed in the report. The Chairman commented on how impressed he had been with both events organised by the Young Firefighters Association (YFA): the evening at the Prestatyn Branch which included a visit from Mr Chris Ruane MP and the event held in Holyhead with a view to establishing a branch of the YFA in the town. It had been encouraging to see so many young people and their parents supporting both events. The Chairman was of the view that the FIRE 2004 Conference in Manchester, was on the whole, a disappointing event particularly

in terms of the number of delegates in attendance, the lack of exhibitors and the overall cost of the Conference. The event seemed to be intended more towards officers rather than authority members. He felt that it might, in future, prove more beneficial operationally and financially to amalgamate the FIRE Conference with the Local Government Association (LGA) Fire Conference. Members were advised that it had been decided, following the meeting between the Wales Fire Services' Forum and the Welsh Assembly Government's (WAG) Minister for Social Justice and Regeneration, Mrs Edwina Hart AM on 13<sup>th</sup> September 2004 when post devolution arrangements had been discussed, to hold another meeting of the Forum on 30<sup>th</sup> September 2004 with a view to discussing the way forward. It was the Chairman and the Vice-Chairman's intention to attend the meeting. The Chairman had been the only Welsh representative present at the LGA Fire Forum meeting in London on 17<sup>th</sup> September 2004. Among the items discussed were the new discipline procedures, the future constitution of the LGA Fire Forum and the proposed timetable for establishing regional control rooms in England. Although the WAG had emphasised that it did not intend to introduce a regional fire control in Wales, the establishment of regional control rooms in England would have an impact on Welsh fire and rescue authorities. In reply to a question from Councillor C Shone on which issues were still outstanding following the resolution of the pay dispute, the Chairman advised that one of the issues was the new disciplinary procedures which would hopefully, be resolved by January 2005.

Councillor M Griffith thanked the Chairman for his report and for expanding on the details it contained. In her opinion the report highlighted the extra work and commitment undertaken by the Chairman and Vice-Chairman which she felt should receive remunerated recognition. The Chairman advised that the issue of remuneration would be discussed under business item number 10 on the agenda. It was:

**Resolved: - to note the information contained in the report**

## **7) Pensions Review**

The Treasurer introduced his report (previously circulated) which detailed the outcome of a recent review undertaken in respect of the current position of the Pensions Provision and the estimated future impact of retirements. He explained that the report, which was self-explanatory, was the customary statement presented to the Authority in September each year and that the recommendation was to amend the amount contributed from the revenue budget to the Pension Provision to £140,000 for the next eleven years, subject to an annual review. The Treasurer apologised for the error contained in the total field of the "contribution to provision" column in the appendix to the report, which should have read £1,540,000.

Councillor E C George enquired whether the Minister, during recent meetings, had given any indication whether the WAG intended to revise the Pension

Scheme once the National Assembly for Wales (NAfW) assumed responsibility for fire and rescue services in Wales. The Chief Fire Officer advised that the Minister had not given indications of any plans to introduce local changes to the Pension Scheme following devolution. He proceeded to explain that the Pension Scheme was one of a number of transitional issues that were still under discussion with Assembly officials and that he would be travelling to Cardiff that afternoon to discuss various devolution issues with Assembly civil servants. The Chairman also undertook to raise the matter at the next Forum meeting on 30<sup>th</sup> September and with the Minister at their next meeting. Members:

***Resolved: - that the Authority reduces the contribution from revenue to the Pension Provision to £140,000 per year for the next eleven years, subject to an annual review***

#### **8) Provisional Outturn 2004/05**

The Treasurer introduced his report (previously circulated) detailing the estimated provisional outturn for the financial year 2004/05. He explained that the 2004/05 budget included a provision for the settlement of the June 2003 Pay and Conditions of Service Agreement. The report presented to the Authority showed the current levels of expenditure for the year to date. Payment of the final stages of the Agreement had recently been approved and subsequently the provisional estimated outturn figure quoted took into account these payments. The Treasurer then proceeded to detail the main areas of underspend and overspend listed in his report. Various factors had contributed to the expenditure level on salaries being considerably lower than originally projected. If the Authority experienced incidents similar to the recent major fire in Wrexham, or extreme weather conditions, during the remainder of the financial year they would have a significant effect on the amount spent on salaries. Another factor, which had not been built into the budget provision was the significant increase in power charges recently announced by electricity and gas companies. The effect of these increases on the Authority's budget could not be fully calculated at present. The Treasurer advised that by the Authority's next meeting in December 2004 he should be in a better position to provide a more accurate projected outturn figure. In reply to a question from Councillor E C George as to whether any more information had been received on whether transitional funding would be repayable, the Treasurer advised that to date no transitional funding had been received and no confirmation had been received if any such funding would be repayable.

Councillor E F Evans enquired whether there was an error in the totals columns on pages 4 and 5 of the annex to the report: the 'projected outturn 2004/05' column on the full version of the 'outturn statement to 31 August 2004' showed the total amount as £26,176,235, whilst the Best Value format of the 'outturn statement to 31 August 2004' quoted a 'projected outturn 2004/05' total of £26,276,235. Both versions however quoted a 'budget variance' figure of £676,016. The Treasurer undertook to re-examine the figures and, if found to be a

typographical error it would be rectified. If it transpired that £100,000 had been inadvertently omitted from any of the expenditure details quoted he would write to all members giving a full explanation. Members then:

**Resolved:** -

- i. to note that the outturn estimate was based on current levels of activity and that, as indicated in the report, these may change; and***
- ii. therefore to note the underspend and to give consideration on how to deal with the underspend at the next meeting of the Fire Authority when an updated outturn figure would be available***

## **9) Integrated Risk Management Plan 2**

The Chief Fire Officer introduced his report (previously circulated) informing members of the requirements of the second year of the Integrated Risk Management Planning (IRMP) process, suggesting areas for development and further exploration, and proposing that the Executive Panel be authorised to develop the proposals and consult with the public. For the benefit of new Authority members prior to detailing the contents of the report the Chief Fire Officer provided background information on the IRMP process and a synopsis of the procedure followed by the Authority for the preparation of its first IRMP and action plan in 2003/04. All members had, recently, been issued with a copy of the Authority's first IRMP and action plan along with the reports and minutes relating to its adoption. The Chief Fire Officer emphasised that the guidelines published for the second year of the IRMP stressed that the requirement was to complement and carry forward the findings of the first plan and to produce a second year action plan for public consultation. There was no requirement to make fundamental changes to the original plan. Owing to the requirement to ensure consistency with the National Assembly's National Framework for Wales document, publication of which was still awaited, the need to align the IRMP process with the budget process for the 2005/06 financial year and the delay brought about by the rescheduling of the local authority elections, the timescale for the preparation of the draft action plan and consultation was extremely tight. Consequently, officers had suggested various subject areas for development and further exploration to the Executive Panel at its meeting on 26<sup>th</sup> August 2004, for their consideration. The Chief Fire Officer then proceeded to detail the various subject areas listed in his report and answered members questions.

Councillor D D Millar joined the meeting at this point.

Councillor D Jones enquired whether it would be possible for Officers to report the financial savings achieved through collaborative working with neighbouring fire and rescue authorities to the Authority, as he was firmly of the view that it was important that the Authority could demonstrate to the general public the benefits and savings achieved through the IRMP process. The Chief Fire Officer

agreed to include this information in the work undertaken on the revised action plan. Members then:

**Resolved:** -

- i. to note the contents of the report; and***
- ii. authorised the Executive Panel to develop the proposed subject areas making such amendments, additions and alterations as they deemed appropriate and once satisfied consult the public on the second year action plan***

**10) Allowances for Fire Authority Members**

The Chairman invited the Deputy Monitoring Officer, in the absence of the Clerk, to give members a verbal briefing on the latest developments regarding the introduction of a scheme of allowances for fire authority members in Wales. Members were informed by the Deputy Monitoring Officer that the Clerk had received a copy of the revised draft regulations, which were to be laid before the Assembly on 21<sup>st</sup> September 2004, midmorning the previous Friday requesting his comments on them by 3pm that afternoon. Due to the extremely tight deadline given to him to comment on the revised regulations, the Clerk had only been able to submit minor comments. A motion to approve the regulations was due to be debated at the Assembly's plenary session on 28<sup>th</sup> September, if approved the regulations would come into force on 29<sup>th</sup> September 2004.

Members were informed by the Deputy Monitoring Officer that the published regulations provided for a basic allowance of up to £505 to be paid to all members for the remainder of the 2004/05 year. For the 2005/06 financial year the allowance payable should not exceed £1002. Increases in the allowances from 2006 onwards could not exceed the average of the increases in basic allowances in the constituent authorities. The amount of Special Responsibilities Allowance (SRA) payable to the Chairman for the remainder of the 2004/05 year should not be in excess of £4591, with the payment for 2005/06 not exceeding £9108. Corresponding allowances payable to the Vice-Chairman should not exceed £3529 and £7000 respectively. The same stipulation that applied to the basic allowance from 2006 onwards would also be applied to the SRAs: the increase in each SRA could not exceed the average of the increases in SRAs paid by the constituent authorities. The regulations included provisions to pay a care allowance and travel and subsistence allowances. The Authority was informed by the Deputy Monitoring Officer that the Clerk had discussed further the position regarding the backdating of allowances with Assembly officials and was now satisfied that the Assembly was not in a position to backdate the scheme to a date prior to 29 September 2004, if that was the date the Regulations actually came into force. This was in contrast to the situation faced by councils in 2002 when regulations permitted any changes made by them to be backdated to the 1<sup>st</sup> April. The fact that no scheme of allowances currently existed for fire authority members prohibited payments from being backdated to

a date prior to when the regulations came into force. Any amendments to the scheme in future years would permit backdating to 1<sup>st</sup> April of the year in question. Consequently, the Authority was likely to face a considerable budgetary saving for 2004/05 as the budget provision for allowances would far exceed the amount legislation permitted to be paid.

Members were advised that they were not required to decide on the detail of the Authority's scheme of allowances at the current meeting. That task could be delegated to the Executive Panel at its next meeting on 18<sup>th</sup> October 2004. The Executive Panel could consider the contents of the scheme in detail and submit its recommendations to the Fire Authority for approval at its December meeting.

The Chairman thanked the Deputy Monitoring Officer for conveying the Clerk's information to the Authority. He registered his dissatisfaction regarding the refusal to backdate the allowances. The Chairman was happy to accept the legal advice given by the Clerk but was firmly of the view that the delay in introducing the scheme of allowances in Wales lay with the Assembly. Some 18 months had elapsed between the initial consultation on the principle of establishing a scheme and the regulations being formally approved.

Councillor D Jones enquired how the proposed regulations compared to the regulations that governed the allowances paid to members of police authorities. The Chairman advised that enquiries would be made and reported to the Executive Panel at its meeting in October and to the Authority's meeting in December.

The Treasurer was of the view that, as the Authority had already agreed to the principle of supporting the introduction of a scheme of allowances for members, the Authority could adopt a resolution to establish its own scheme from the earliest date possible. A number of members concurred with this view and by a majority vote it was:

**Resolved:** -

- i. that North Wales Fire Authority establishes a scheme of allowances for fire authority members from 29<sup>th</sup> September 2004, or from the earliest date permitted by legislation; and***
- ii. that the Executive Panel, at its meeting on 18<sup>th</sup> October 2004, considers the detail of the Scheme and submits its recommendations to the Fire Authority meeting on 20<sup>th</sup> December for approval and adoption***

Councillors D D Millar and C Shone requested that their votes against the above resolution be recorded. Councillor Millar stated that he objected to the principle of paying allowances to ordinary non-executive members of fire authorities.



### **11) Proposed Changes to Standing Orders**

The Deputy Monitoring Officer introduced the Clerk's report (previously circulated) listing the proposed amendments to the Standing Orders in accordance with the recommendations of the Executive Panel at its meeting on 26 August 2004. The amendments were moved and seconded and it was:

**Resolved: - to note the amendments as listed in the annex to the report and that the debate on the amendments be adjourned until the next meeting of the Fire Authority on 20<sup>th</sup> December 2004**

### **12) Performance Management Framework**

The Chief Fire Officer introduced his report (previously circulated) to inform members of the progress made in relation to developing a new performance management framework for the fire and rescue authorities in Wales. He advised that the Authority was, under the Local Government Act 1999, bound by the provisions of Best Value for the purpose of promoting a high quality public service that met identified needs. Upon the devolvement of responsibility for the fire and rescue services in Wales to NAFW the Services would come under the auspices of the Welsh equivalent of the Best Value regime, the Wales Programme for Improvement (WPI), to which local authorities in Wales had been adhering to since 2002. The Chief Fire Officer advised that the report was an update on the work undertaken to date in developing a new fire and rescue authorities' specific performance management framework for Wales. The Steering Group, established to develop the framework, was meeting on a regular basis and he was optimistic that more information on the progress made would be available by the next Fire Authority meeting in December. Members:

**Resolved: - to note the progress made to date**

The Chairman informed members that the meeting would adjourn for a short break at this point.

The meeting adjourned 11:30am and reconvened at 11:45am

Councillor E C George left the meeting at this point.

### **13) Presentation on the Equalities Standard for Wales**

The Chairman welcomed Naomi Alleyne, Welsh Local Government Association's (WLGA) Head of Equalities and Social Justice, to the meeting to give members a presentation on the Equalities Standard for Wales. Copies of the presentation and the Executive Summary document of the "Managing Equality in Welsh Local Government" report were distributed to all present. The report and executive summary, published the previous week, were the result of research work undertaken on behalf of the WLGA's by the University of Wales, Swansea.

Miss Alleyne then gave members background information on the “Equalities Standard for Local Government in Wales” and explained that the Standard was a comprehensive framework designed to develop and embed equalities across an organisation’s spectrum of policies and functions. Its purpose was to address equal opportunities issues not only for employees but also for the general public in relation to the organisation’s service delivery. Equalities was a developing agenda. Bringing together the various strands of equality issues under one umbrella and adopting the Standard would facilitate any necessary changes brought about by amendments to the plethora of legislation that governed equality matters. It would also assist an organisation in ensuring that it complied with the various Acts. She explained that the Equalities Standard was fully compatible with the modernisation programme for the fire and rescue service and that it would integrate well with the new performance management framework being developed under the WPI. The Employers’ Organisation had recently announced that it intended to develop a framework which would be more in tune with the fire and rescue services operational structure.

Ms Alleyne emphasised that the Equalities Standard required a corporate commitment from both staff and Authority members alike. There would be a need to develop clear aims and a realistic action plan detailing the Authority’s achievement expectations within certain timescales. Progress would be measured through a self-assessment method: data and evidence would be collated, evaluated and validated prior to the results being reported. She emphasised that the work needed to be both effective and impactful, it was imperative that Officers received the Authority’s support in order to drive the agenda forward. North Wales Fire and Rescue Service had already established a Steering Group which had been tasked with collating the required information and driving forward the equalities agenda. In reply to a question from Councillor C Shone, the Service’s Equalities Adviser, Ms Sue Jones, informed members that the Steering Group comprised of representatives from both operational and support staff, part-time and full-time, from across the Service’s area.

Following the presentation Ms Alleyne invited members’ questions which she duly answered. Councillor D Jones congratulated Ms Alleyne on a very interesting presentation but registered his disappointment that the slides shown were in English only. He was of the view that the presentation itself therefore was not compliant with the whole ethos of the Equalities Standard. Ms Alleyne apologised for this. The Chief Fire Officer reaffirmed his commitment that the Authority and the Service would strive to abide by the Equalities Standard. The Fire and Rescue Service, across the UK, had historically a very poor record in the field. He also drew members’ attention to the fact that compliance with the Standard would incur added costs which would have to be borne from within the Authority’s budget. The Chairman, on behalf of the Authority, thanked Ms Alleyne for attending and for providing them with a comprehensive overview of the Standard.

**14) “Informative”**

The Chief Fire Officer presented the current issue of the 'Informative' magazine to members. The Chairman agreed with the Chief Fire Officer's view that the current issue was a particularly impressive one and conveyed his congratulations and gratitude to Bethan Davies, the Service's Press and Public Relations Officer, for the tremendous work and effort she had put into writing, collating and editing the publication. It was:

**Resolved: - to accept the publication**

**15) Urgent Matters**

None.

**PART II**

No business.

Meeting concluded at 12:30pm.

**The above minutes, pending any inclusions shown, are approved as a true and correct record of proceedings.**

**Signed:** T Roberts

**Dated:** 20 December, 2004