

**NORTH WALES FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY
EXECUTIVE PANEL**

Minutes of the Executive Panel Meeting of the North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority held on 13 February 2017 at Fire and Rescue Headquarters, St Asaph. Meeting commenced at 10am.

PRESENT

Cllr M Ll Davies (Chair)	Denbighshire County Council
Cllr M Holland	Denbighshire County Council
Cllr P R Lewis	Conwy County Borough Council
Cllr G Lowe	Wrexham County Borough Council
Cllr H McGuill	Flintshire County Council
Cllr R E Parry	Conwy County Borough Council
Cllr P Pemberton	Wrexham County Borough Council

ALSO PRESENT:

S A Smith (Chief Fire Officer and Chief Executive); D Docx (Deputy Chief Fire Officer); R Fairhead and G Brandrick (Assistant Chief Fire Officers); S Millington (Senior Fire Safety Manager); C Nott (Temporary Senior Training and Development Manager); G Roberts (Senior Professional and Service Standards Manager); S Morris (Corporate Planning Manager); T Williams (Corporate Communications Manager); A Davies (Member Liaison Officer).

APOLOGIES

Cllr B Cowie	Denbighshire County Council
Cllr L W Davies	Anglesey County Council
Cllr B Dunn	Flintshire County Council
Cllr R O Jones	Anglesey County Council
Cllr W R Owen	Gwynedd Council
Cllr W T Owen	Gwynedd Council
Cllr A Tansley	Conwy County Borough Council

1 DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

1.1 None

2 NOTICE OF URGENT MATTERS

2.1 None

3 MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 24 OCTOBER 2016

3.1 The minutes of the last meeting were submitted for approval.

3.2 **RESOLVED to approve the minutes as a true and correct record.**

4 MATTERS ARISING

4.1 There were no matters arising.

5 PERFORMANCE MONITORING

5.1 The DCFO presented the report which provided information relating to the Service's activity and monitoring performance against improvement objectives. It was pleasing to note that the performance monitoring for the third quarter of the 2016-17 financial year was overall positive.

5.2 There are fewer injuries resulting from fire incidents and more people are able to leave their properties without assistance; these are considered to be partly attributable to the prevention advice given by the FRS as part of the home safety checks (HSC).

5.3 In response to a question about HSC referrals from partner organisations, it was confirmed that a recent pilot set up in Wrexham whereby practitioners install target hardening equipment for victims of domestic violence, as well as undertake a HSC, has proved successful and the Service has been able to reach people who would otherwise not necessarily engage with the FRS. This is a jointly funded project with the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) and the local authority; discussions are ongoing with the PCC to ascertain whether there is funding to extend this project to other local authority areas.

5.4 Members acknowledged the reduction in deliberate fire incidents and noted that a DVD 'Burning your Future' will be launched on 17 February to further highlight the dangers of arson. Although the DVD is very specific and local to the Wrexham area it will be shown in schools across Wales. The Arson Reduction Team works closely with North Wales Police on prevention.

5.5 There had been a slight increase in special service incidents other than road traffic collisions, but this was a welcome increase due to the fact that figure now includes incidents where the community assistance teams in Conwy and Denbighshire are being called out by the Ambulance Service to assist people who have fallen in their homes, co-responding incidents and assisting the police with 'missing from home' incidents.

5.6 The false alarms from automatic fire alarms in non domestic premises had increased due to calls from hospitals where a lot of building work is currently taking place. However, now only one appliance is sent as opposed to the two that was sent prior to the change of policy in this area.

5.7 **RESOLVED to note the contents of the performance monitoring report.**

6 IMPROVEMENT AND WELLBEING OBJECTIVES 2017-18

6.1 The DCFO presented the report which summarised the response to the Authority's consultation on its draft improvement and wellbeing objectives 2017-18; and to propose the basis of a final draft Improvement and Wellbeing Plan 2017-18 for approval by the full Authority at its next meeting on 20 March 2017.

- 6.2 The majority of responses were made via an online questionnaire, with 164 respondents choosing to add further comments. Twenty-seven organisations and individuals submitted written responses by e-mail or post. A number of written responses raised similar or identical concerns, many of which echoed members' own discussions at last June's Fire and Rescue Authority meeting.
- 6.3 The key themes arising from those written responses included the anticipated population growth and the large industrial estate in the Wrexham area, HMP Berwyn, incidence of arson and attending incidents over the border. Members noted the officers' response to these key themes as included at appendix 2 of the report to the Executive Panel. Having led members through the officers' response on the key themes, the CFO reminded Members that the proposal was following six months of discussions amongst members and that this was the least unpalatable of the options available in order to save the £900,000 required by 2019-20.
- 6.4 Cllr Pemberton and Cllr Lowe expressed concern about the proposal to remove an appliance from Wrexham. However, Cllr McGuill was of the view that the Authority should be emphasising the point that the FRS is re-organising its way of working, re-designing the service and that Wrexham will be coming in line with other areas of North Wales such as Rhyl and Deeside. Cllr Holland was concerned that the positive message about the prevention work and the consequent reduction in fires was not being understood by the public and that a population increase does not necessarily equate to an increase in fire incidents.
- 6.5 Following on from the discussion about the Authority's future objectives and anticipated budget issues, the Chair asked the CFO to inform members about the 'White Paper: Reforming Local Government: Resilient and Renewed'. The CFO referred to section 4.3 of the document which is specific to the fire and rescue authorities and also mentioned a letter received from Cabinet Secretaries, Carl Sargeant AM and Mark Drakeford AM. Members noted that officers would draft a response for members' approval.
- 6.6 **RESOLVED to approve the production of a draft Improvement and Wellbeing Plan 2017-18 based on the four improvement objectives shown below for approval by the Authority at its March 2017 meeting and publication before 1 April 2017:**
- (i) to help to keep people and communities safe by preventing deaths and injuries from accidental fires in living accommodation;
 - (ii) to adopt a 3-year financial strategy that combines using reserves, increasing financial contributions and making service reductions;
 - (iii) to re-balance the Authority's resources to match risk by implementing a model of resourcing that ensures the availability of at least 20 strategically located fire crews in North Wales at times of relatively lower risk, and at least 38 at times of relatively higher risk; and
 - (iv) to explore opportunities to diversify the role of a firefighter and offer additional services to the public of North Wales.

Cllr P Pemberton wished to record his vote against the resolution and Cllr G Lowe wished to abstain from the vote.

7 STRATEGIC RISK REGISTER

- 7.1 The DCFO presented the summary report which highlighted the main strategic risks for the Authority. Members were reminded that they have previously approved the strategic risk management policy which defines a strategic risk as 'an event that, should it occur, would impact on the achievement of the Authority's planned outcomes and/or the delivery of its core functions'. It was noted that officers regularly review and update the risk register and re-score risks as appropriate.
- 7.2 The highest two risks remained the same as previously reported to Members: attack on the Service's computer systems and the Service's level of resilience to a sudden loss of staff with specialist knowledge and/or experience of NWFRA business; both risks remain in the 'very high' category of risk. In order to try and mitigate the risk of loss of specialist staff knowledge, officers are developing strategic alliances with other organisations. In terms of the ICT systems, an internal audit of cyber security is currently being performed and the results will be reported in the internal audit annual report 2016/17.
- 7.3 **RESOLVED to note the information provided about the strategic risks that the Authority faces.**

8 RESOURCING TO RISK

- 8.1 ACFO Fairhead gave members a progress report on the "matching resourcing to risk" pilot being undertaken by North Wales Fire and Rescue Service.
- 8.2 Members were reminded that the matching resourcing to risk concept is based on the results of the fire cover review which identified that risk varies by time of day. During the evening and night-time, when people are sleeping, fire risk is at a higher level than during the day. Therefore fire risk in North Wales could be adequately provided for by maintaining the availability of a minimum of 20 fire appliances during the day, when the risk was identified as being lower, and the availability of a minimum of 38 fire appliances during the evening and night, when the risk increases. Various shift systems of crewing are used including WDS rural firefighters who are flexible and able to be deployed at very short notice and RDS firefighters who are supernumerary on their own station or the only firefighters available at their own station and are therefore deployed to a nearby station to add to the crew there.
- 8.3 It was noted that overall the pilot is working well but that there had been challenges during December due to public holidays, end of the annual leave calendar year and illness. However, following recent recruitment campaigns, new fully trained RDS firefighters are starting to join their local stations and it is anticipated that these new recruits will improve the evening and night time availability of those stations. A review of the trial will be undertaken at its conclusion at the end of March 2017.
- 8.4 **RESOLVED to note the information provided and receive six monthly progress reports.**

9 WELSH LANGUAGE STANDARDS COMPLIANCE

- 9.1 ACFO Fairhead introduced the report which gave members an update on progress with the Service's Welsh language monitoring report 2015-16 and a briefing in relation to compliance with the Welsh language standards.
- 9.2 Members were reminded that the Welsh language standards as regulated by the Welsh Language Commissioner will come into force on 30 March 2017 replacing the previous Welsh language schemes. The Service has launched its 'Get Ready!' campaign in preparation for the new standards and with the aim of raising awareness and informing staff of their responsibilities in relation to the standards.
- 9.3 **RESOLVED to note:**
- (i) **the progress made in relation to the Service's annual monitoring report 2015-16 and its commitment to ensuring the Service continues to promote the Welsh language and monitor progress in this area;**
 - (ii) **that preparations are in hand for meeting the requirements of the new Welsh language standards which will come into force in March 2017.**

10 FLOODING UPDATE

- 10.1 ACFO Brandrick presented the report which provided members with an update on the situation regarding the provision of resources for flooding and other water related emergencies.
- 10.2 Members were informed that in December 2016, the Welsh FRAs had submitted a joint business case requesting funding support in order to maintain existing resource capability for flooding and water rescue response; the WG has approved the business case and will provide funding totalling £1.78m to the FRAs in Wales for 2016-17 and 2017-18 for flood response and water rescue. £780k has been approved for use in the current financial year (2016-17). The funding is predominantly capital and will be utilised to add to and refresh existing high value major items across Wales. However specifically in North Wales the majority of the funding allocated will be used to purchase an additional high volume pump (HVP) This has been identified as a necessity following recent significant flooding event experience. A complete HVP unit consisting of the pump, equipment pods and prime mover vehicle has been ordered utilising the funding approved for use in 2016-17.
- 10.3 It was noted that, to date, no formal feedback has been received from WG following the Authority's response to the consultation on placing a statutory duty on the Welsh FRAs to respond to flooding and other water related emergencies.
- 10.4 Members welcomed this piece of good news and it was **RESOLVED to note the information contained in the report.**

11 FIREFIGHTERS' PENSION SCHEME 2015 - TRANSITIONAL PROTECTION LEGAL CHALLENGE

11.1 The DCFO presented the report which informed members about the progress of the legal challenge and to highlight potential implications for the Fire and Rescue Authority.

11.2 In 2015 the two existing firefighters' pension schemes, the 1992 and 2006 schemes were closed by central government and all firefighters were transferred into a new pension scheme - the firefighters' pension scheme 2015. Some firefighters, who were at a more advanced stage of their careers, were allowed to remain in their original pension scheme under transitional protection arrangements. The Fire Brigades Union (FBU) challenged the government in relation to the transitional protection on the grounds of age discrimination and also incorporated further claims around race, gender and equal pay. The Fire and Rescue Services National Employers offered to prepare to manage the claims on behalf of all FRAs. This culminated in an employment tribunal hearing which was heard in January 2017, the outcome of which is currently unknown. Any developments will be reported to Members at the next meeting.

11.3 **RESOLVED to note the contents of this report.**