

NORTH WALES FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY

Minutes of the meeting of North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority held on Monday 27th March 2006 at Siambwr Dafydd Orwig, Caernarfon. Meeting commenced at 12 noon.

Present:

Councillor

Representing

T Roberts (Chairman)

Gwynedd Council

P C Evans JP

Conwy County Borough Council

W E Jones

Conwy County Borough Council

D W Smith (substitute)

Conwy County Borough Council

S Frobisher

Denbighshire County Council

J A Smith

Denbighshire County Council

D Barratt

Flintshire County Council

E F Evans

Flintshire County Council

J Ovens

Flintshire County Council

C Shone

Flintshire County Council

M Griffith

Gwynedd Council

W T Owen

Gwynedd Council

G O Williams

Gwynedd Council

N S Colbourne

Wrexham County Borough Council

G M Craddock

Wrexham County Borough Council

E C George

Wrexham County Borough Council

P M Shone

Wrexham County Borough Council

W J Chorlton

Ynys Môn County Council

J A Roberts

Ynys Môn County Council

W T Roberts

Ynys Môn County Council

Also present:

S A Smith (Chief Fire Officer and Chief Executive); I R Miller (Clerk and Monitoring Officer to the Authority); S Forrest (Accountant, Treasurer's Department, Conwy County Borough Council); C Enness (Deputy Chief Fire Officer); C Hanks (Assistant Chief Fire Officer, Service Support); P S Claydon (Assistant Chief Fire Officer, Service Delivery); S Morris (Corporate Planning Manager); W A Murphy (Senior Operations Manager); K Hughes (Senior Development Manager); D G Roberts (Senior Fire Safety Manager) and Rh Evans (Member Liaison Officer).

PART I

1) Apologies

<u>Councillor</u>	<u>Representing</u>
M Williams (Vice-Chairman)	Wrexham County Borough Council
S C Jones	Conwy County Borough Council
J A MacLennan (substitute)	Conwy County Borough Council
J Vaughan	Conwy County Borough Council
D Jones MBE	Denbighshire County Council
D Clayton	Flintshire County Council
E Morgan Jones	Gwynedd Council
K W Finch	Treasurer to the Authority
P L Slee	Assistant Chief Officer (Corporate Services)

The Clerk informed members that Councillor D W Smith was deputising at the meeting instead of Councillors S C Jones and J A MacLennan. Councillor Smith had signed the declaration to abide by the Authority's Code of Conduct and had been issued with copies of the Authority's Standing Orders and Financial Regulations. The Chairman welcomed Councillor Smith to the meeting.

2) Notice of Urgent Matters

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

3) Announcements

The Chairman:

- i. paid tribute to the late Peter Lennard, the Service's Operations Support and Development Group Manager, who passed away in February following a long illness. He detailed Mr Lennard's long and distinguished career with the Service and expressed the Authority's condolences to his family, friends and colleagues. The Chairman also expressed his gratitude to the Chief Fire Officer and his staff for undertaking the funeral arrangements. As a mark of respect members and officers stood in silent tribute;
- ii. extended the Authority's condolences to Councillor J A Smith following the recent death of his mother;
- iii. Councillor S C Jones was gradually getting stronger and had recently attended and participated in one of Conwy Council's committee meetings. A card which the Chairman had received from Councillor Jones was read out to the Authority. In her card

- Councillor Jones thanked members and officers for their messages of support and good wishes and for the gift which they had sent her;
- iv. Best wishes were sent to Cllr E Morgan Jones who has recently undergone surgery and was believed to be recovering well;
 - v. Congratulations were extended to Councillor D Jones who celebrated his 80th birthday in February;
 - vi. Congratulations were extended to Assistant Chief Fire Officer Paul Claydon on becoming a grandfather for the first time;
 - vii. Congratulations were also extended to the Clerk, Mr Ian Miller, on being elected the Chair of SOLACE (Society of Local Authority Chief Executives and Senior Managers) (Wales) for 2006/07;
 - viii. Members were reminded that all mileage claims submitted after the 1st April 2006 had to be accompanied by VAT receipts and that travel and subsistence claims from that date were to be submitted on the new style claim forms;
 - ix. An open day was being held at Rhyl Fire Station on 1st April 2006 at which the public would be shown the plans for the first purpose built community fire station in North Wales;
 - x. Walesfire 2006 Conference - 8th to 10th May 2006, Llandudno: members who had not already registered for the Conference were requested to contact the Member Liaison Officer as soon as possible;
 - xi. Dates of future committee meetings: members were advised that the Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP) Working Group had resolved to hold its next meeting on Monday 8th May 2006 and that the date for Executive Panel meeting, due to the unavailability of some members, had been changed from Tuesday 23rd May to Thursday 18th May 2006. Both meetings would commence at 10am. The Authority's Annual Meeting and next ordinary business meeting was scheduled to be held at the Guildhall, Wrexham on Monday 19th June 2006. Following the Executive Panel's decision at its meeting on 13th March 2006 to hold a lunch to mark the Authority's tenth anniversary, members were asked to consider whether this anniversary lunch should be held on the day of the Annual Meeting, and if that was the case whether the venue for the Annual Meeting should be changed to a more central location.

4) Minutes

The following minutes were submitted:

- i. Fire and Rescue Authority meeting held on 19th December 2005

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

The following minutes were submitted for information purposes:

- ii. Executive Panel meeting held on 13th December 2005
- iii. Standards Committee meeting held on 22nd February 2006

5) Matters Arising

The following matters arose from the minutes submitted:

Fire and Rescue Authority Minutes, 19th December 2005, Pages 3 and 4, Matters Arising – “The Relationship between the Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA) and the Fire and Rescue Authorities in Wales”: The Chief Fire Officer informed members that he had reported to the Executive Panel at its meeting on the 13th March that discussions were still ongoing regarding the membership of the newly formed WLGA Fire Services Panel. The Director of the WLGA had indicated to the Chief Fire Officer that the final decision on this matter lay with the elected representatives. Councillor E C George was of the view that as this Panel would be a sub-committee of the WLGA it would also require the approval of the Association. North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority had requested that the membership of the Panel should include the chair, vice-chair and four other elected representatives from each of the three fire and rescue authorities. The elected representatives from the other fire and rescue authorities seemed to be of the view that the membership should be restricted to the chair and vice-chair of each authority. The Chairman undertook to raise the issue again with the Director of the WLGA when the Co-ordinating Committee, which had already endorsed North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority's proposal, met on 31st March 2006. At the members request the Chairman agreed to try and convene a meeting between representatives from all three Welsh fire and rescue authorities during the Walesfire 2006 Conference with a view to reaching an agreement on the issue.

12.15pm Councillor P M Shone entered the meeting at this juncture.

6) Chairman's Report

The Chairman introduced his report (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 and Rescue Authority's last meeting on 19th December 2005. The Chairman detailed the various meetings and events listed in his report and made particular reference to meetings of the National Joint Council for Local Authorities' Fire Brigades (NJC). A number of these meetings had dealt with the proposed firefighters pay award for next year and the pay award for chief officers. He confirmed that the NJC was now looking at arranging a meeting with the Fire Brigades Union (FBU) to discuss the proposals. The Chairman also confirmed that at this stage, due to confidentiality restrictions, he could not share this information with the Authority. In reply to a question from Councillor E C George the Chairman and Deputy Chief Fire Officer confirmed that the threat of industrial action by the FBU over pension rights had been temporarily lifted following the Government's decision to protect the pension

rights of serving firefighters. The FBU was now considering the new proposals presented to it by the Government. On the matter of the industrial action scheduled for the 28th March 2006 by the public services unions, of which support staff were members, the Chief Fire Officer advised that he was confident that a near normal service could be maintained. The Panel was advised that the details of the financial implications of the recent Law Lords ruling on the "Retained Firefighters and Part-Time Workers (Prevention of Less Favourable Treatment) Regulations 2000" were still unclear as the case had been referred back to the Employment Tribunal for it to give further consideration to the issues based on the guidance given by the House of Lords.

The Chairman advised the Authority that it had been a pleasing experience to be present at the Marine Operations Group (MOG) Seminar held at Portsmouth between 7th and 8th March especially to hear North Wales Fire Rescue Service being mentioned on a number of occasions. Particular reference had been made to the Transportation Briefing Card devised by Lee Williams of North Wales Fire and Rescue Service's Operational Support and Development Group. This booklet, to be kept in the map pocket of each transit suit, details the relevant safety information and gives guidance on the use of the additional personal protective equipment when dealing with maritime incidents.

In response to a request the Chairman agreed to provide members in future with a verbal summary of the matters discussed at the Fire and Rescue Liaison Group and the Wales Fire and Rescue Service Advisory Committee meetings.

Councillor P C Evans thanked the Chairman for his comprehensive report. Councillor Evans was of the view that the report demonstrated the Chairman's commitment to his duties as Chairman of the Authority and requested that the Authority's gratitude to him for all his hard work be placed on record. It was:

Resolved: - *to note the information contained in the report and that in future a verbal update be provided on the matters discussed at the Fire and Rescue Liaison Group and the Wales Fire and Rescue Service Advisory Committee meetings.*

7) Integrated Risk Management Plan – Third Year Action Plan

The Authority was informed by the Clerk that the Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP) Working Group had, at its meeting earlier that day, recommended that the Authority should defer a decision on the adoption of the IRMP 3rd Year Action Plan until its next meeting on 19th June 2006. The Group had also requested that further clarification should be sought from the Welsh Assembly Government (WAG) on the implications of the recently published WAG Service Standard which aimed to "provide 80% of Welsh Homes with an attendance to a fire in the home within 10 minutes".

The Clerk referred members to his supplementary report and in particular to the points in paragraph 10. It was therefore:

Resolved: - that

- i. the Authority defers a decision on the adoption of the IRMP 3rd Year Action Plan until the Fire and Rescue Authority's next meeting on 19th June 2006 pending receipt of further clarification from the Welsh Assembly Government (WAG) on the implications of the recently published WAG Service Standard which aimed to "provide 80% of Welsh homes with an attendance to a fire in the home within 10 minutes"; and*
- ii. a meeting of the IRMP Working Group be convened on the 8th May 2006 to consider any further information received from the WAG in relation to the IRMP process for 2006/07 and the Risk Reduction Planning requirements for 2007/08;*
- iii. having considered the information presented to it on 8th May 2006 that the IRMP Working Group formulates its recommendations on the IRMP Third Year Action Plan for submission to the Fire and Rescue Authority meeting on 19th June 2006;*
- iv. the Authority delegates to the Executive Panel the task of preparing a draft Risk Reduction Plan, with the draft to be approved for consultation at the Fire Authority's meeting on 19th June 2006;*
- v. the Authority's autumn meeting be held in October rather than during September in order to allow sufficient time for the consultation process on the Authority's Risk Reduction Plan for 2007/08; and*
- vi. that a letter to be sent to all Executive Panel/IRMP Working Group members advising them of the dates for the next meetings.*

8) Provisional Outturn 2005/06

In the absence of the Treasurer, the Service's Accountant introduced his report (previously circulated) detailing the estimated provisional outturn for 2005/06 to members. She explained that as the Authority was now approaching the end of the accounting year the estimated underspend figure of £320,032 was fairly accurate. Members:

Resolved: - to note the report and that £70,000 be set aside from the underspend in 2005/06 to create a Provision for Redundancy.

9) Treasury Management

In the Treasurer's absence the Service's Accountant introduced the report (previously circulated) detailing the treasury management activity for the period up to and including 28th February 2006 and advising members that there had been some changes to the Authority's counterparty list. It was:

Resolved: - to note the report and to approve the amended list of counterparties.

10) Annual Report of the Standards Committee

The Clerk introduced his report (previously circulated) which presented members with the Authority's Standards Committee's Annual Report for 2005/06. The report also sought the Authority's support for the Committee's call for a change in legislation that would permit all complaints to be investigated locally in the first instance, with only the more serious ones being referred to the Ombudsman. Councillor W J Chorlton enquired why the Committee was seeking the Authority's support for the change in legislation. The Clerk advised that the Authority's Standards Committee was of the view that allowing local standards committees to investigate initial complaints would ensure that unsubstantiated complaints could be weeded out before being referred to the Ombudsman. Under the present procedures a high number of complaints were referred to the Ombudsman only for him to refer them back for local standards committees' consideration. Changes to legislation, similar to what a number of standards committees in Wales were seeking to secure, were already afoot in England. Councillors W J Chorlton, J A Roberts and E C George were of the view that it would be more transparent and independent if all complaints were referred to the Ombudsman initially. An amendment was proposed and seconded: that the Authority should not support the Standards Committee's call that legislation be amended to allow complaints to be investigated locally in the first instance. On being put to the vote the amendment was carried and it was:

Resolved: - to note the contents of the report but not to support a change in legislation that would allow all complaints to be investigated locally in the first instance with only the more serious ones being referred to the Ombudsman.

11) Update on Pensions

The Clerk introduced his report (previously circulated) updating the Authority on the WAG's progress with legislation on pensions and related issues. The Clerk proceeded to explain that the report dealt with some of the issues which had been raised earlier during the meeting. As detailed in the report very little information had been published by the Assembly Government on various issues relating to pensions. This contrasted with the situation in England where information has been published on a regular basis. According to the Clerk the aspect which caused greatest concern at present was the Assembly Government's delay in placing the compensation scheme on a statutory footing. It was imperative that the WAG legislated to this end as soon as possible to ensure that firefighters in Wales would not be disadvantaged, due to the new tax rules, if a claim for compensation was allowed on or after the 6th April 2006. Following a discussion it was:

Resolved: - to note the report,; and that a strongly worded letter be sent to the Welsh Assembly Government:

- i. reiterating the Authority's concerns regarding the delay in publishing the proposals for the new pension scheme and the timetable for the introduction of the relevant legislation;*
- ii. requesting that guidelines be published forthwith on the temporary pension arrangements that are to be implemented for new recruits from April 2006 prior to the pension contributions being transferred into the new scheme once it has been established; and*
- iii. that action is taken urgently to put the compensation scheme on a proper statutory footing with effect from 1st April 2006 so that firefighters in Wales are not disadvantaged when the new income tax rules come into force on 6 April 2006.*

12) Update on the Young Firefighters Association

The Assistant Chief Fire Officer (Service Delivery) introduced his report (previously circulated) which gave the Authority the latest information on the progress made in establishing the Young Firefighters Association (YFA) in North Wales. The Chairman conveyed the YFA Co-ordinators gratitude to the Authority for providing them with the funding that had enabled them to establish the Achievement Event scheduled for the 17th and 18th June 2006. The Chairman invited all members to attend the event. Councillor S Frobisher informed the Authority that the YFA members were looking forward to the event and she hoped that the holding of the Achievement Event might assist other branches in their efforts to establish themselves. In reply to a question on why branches had been formed in certain areas whilst other areas seem to be void of branches Assistant Chief Fire Officer Claydon advised that these branches relied on the goodwill and the long term commitment of staff at the fire stations concerned. The Chairman thanked all officers involved with the YFA branches for their time, effort and commitment. Members:

Resolved: - to note the report.

12.45pm Councillor W T Owen joined the meeting at this juncture.

13) Phoenix Project

The Assistant Chief Fire Officer (Service Delivery) introduced his report (previously circulated) which updated members on the Phoenix Project. He explained that the Phoenix Project was different to the YFA as it was a youth intervention programme dealing with young people who had problems. The purpose of the Project was to address issues relating to anti-social behaviour by challenging the attitudes of the young people along with their actions. He explained that each Project course accommodated approximately 10 youngsters whose names had been put forward by the Police. A Community Beat Officer would usually be present during the course. The Chairman stated that seeing the young peoples' achievements at the end of the course was extremely pleasing and he

undertook to invite local members to future Phoenix Presentation Ceremonies in their areas. Members welcomed the Project and were of the view that it was a positive way forward in dealing with anti-social behaviour. It was:

Resolved: - *to note the contents of the report.*

14) Informative

The Assistant Chief Fire Officer (Service Support) presented the Authority with the latest issue of the 'Informative' magazine. Members:

Resolved: - *to accept the publication*

15 Urgent Matters

None.

Councillor S Frobisher congratulated Officers on the successful Road Safety Awareness Day, arranged in conjunction with Denbighshire County Council, held at Llysfasi College on Friday 24th March 2006.

PART II

No business.

The meeting concluded at 12.50pm.

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

Signed: I Roberts

Dated: 19 June, 2006