

NORTH WALES FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY EXECUTIVE PANEL

Minutes of the Executive Panel Meeting of the North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority held on 6th February 2012 at Fire and Rescue Headquarters, St Asaph. Meeting commenced at 2pm.

PRESENT

Cllr S Frobisher (Chair)	Denbighshire County Council
Cllr L W Davies	Anglesey County Council
Cllr M LI Davies	Denbighshire County Council
Cllr G C Evans	Denbighshire County Council
Cllr G James	Flintshire County Council
Cllr P Jeffares	Wrexham County Borough Council
Cllr J V Owen	Anglesey County Council
Cllr T Roberts	Gwynedd Council
Cllr W P Roberts	Conwy County Borough Council
Cllr M Thomas	Conwy County Borough Council

ALSO PRESENT:

S A Smith (Chief Fire Officer and Chief Executive); C Everett (Clerk and Monitoring Officer); K Finch (Treasurer); D Docx (Deputy Chief Fire Officer); P Claydon, C Hanks and R Simmons (Assistant Chief Fire Officers); G Brandrick (Senior Operations Manager); R Fairhead (Senior Training and Development Manager); G W Griffiths (Senior Fire Safety Manager); S Forrest (Principal Accountant, Conwy County Borough Council); S Morris (Corporate Planning Manager); V Hill (Performance Analyst); T Williams (Corporate Communications Manager); S Teal-Bromley (Executive Support Manager); A Davies (Member Liaison Officer); A Morris (Wales Audit Office).

Apologies:

Cllr A M Jones	Anglesey County Council
Cllr B Dunn	Flintshire County Council

1 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

1.1 None.

2 MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 21ST NOVEMBER 2011

2.1 The minutes of the meeting held on 21st November were approved as a correct record.

3 MATTERS ARISING

3.1 There were no matters arising.

4 FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITIES IN WALES: STRATEGIC OUTLINE CASE AND DISCUSSION DOCUMENT

4.1 The Chief Fire Officer introduced the report which advised Members of developments since the Fire and Rescue Authority meeting on 19th December 2011.

4.2 At the December meeting, Members received a report representing the thoughts of the three Chief Fire Officers about the future of governance and structure of FRAs in Wales. Following discussion, Members approved the recommendation to endorse the Chief Fire Officers' preferred option and mandated the Chair of the Authority to pursue the establishment of a "National Issues Committee".

4.3 A meeting between the Minister, Chairs and Chief Fire Officers of all the fire and rescue services in Wales was held on 12th January, and the Minister had indicated that he was pleased to receive the report and requested further information about various issues. The Minister was keen to ensure that significant savings would be delivered. A further meeting was held with the Fire and Rescue Advisor and the Head of Fire and Rescue Service Branch on 24th January. Further work will now be undertaken to develop the structure and remit of the National Issues Committee.

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

5 AERIAL LADDER PLATFORMS

5.1 The report was presented to seek a recommendation from Members on the future strategic location of the Service's three ALPs. The decision not to replace the fourth ALP when it came to the end of its serviceable life had been made at the Authority meeting in October 2010 when it had been agreed to adopt a 30 minute attendance standard for ALPs across North Wales. Members were now asked to recommend to the March Authority meeting where the remaining three ALPs should be located.

5.2 Cllr P Jeffares highlighted the fact that the ALP located in Wrexham was the most used, and therefore he felt that it should be retained. Cllr W P Roberts felt that the Llandudno ALP should be retained due to the large number of hotels in Llandudno.

- 5.3 Cllr L W Davies, having considered the geography of North Wales and the statistics provided, was of the view that retaining the Bangor ALP was important due to Wylfa on Anglesey and also to provide cover for the area down to the Llŷn Peninsula. He also considered it essential to have an ALP in Wrexham due to the population as well as the industrial area it covered. Therefore, Cllr Davies felt that Members had to decide between Llandudno and Rhyl as these areas cut across each other and because of the A55 these locations are easier to reach than some other parts of North Wales. Cllr M Thomas agreed that ALPs should remain at Bangor and Wrexham and he stated that the third ALP should be based at Llandudno due to the number of hotels in the area; Cllr M Thomas therefore proposed Bangor, Wrexham and Llandudno as the three locations.
- 5.4 Cllr J V Owen was of the view that as Members had previously decided to alter the attendance standard from 20 minutes to 30 minutes, they should now let the officers decide the locations as they have the best knowledge and understanding of the situation.
- 5.5 Cllr G C Evans agreed with Cllr Owen's view and having considered the information provided in annex 1 of the report felt that Rhyl's ALP should be kept due to the industrial area along the coast from Rhyl to Flint and that Rhyl is a more central location. At Cllr M Ll Davies' request, ACFO Claydon led Members through the information set out in annex 1 of the report.
- 5.6 The Chief Fire Officer reminded Members that hotels, student accommodation, houses of multiple occupation and other such premises are subject to stringent fire safety legislation and building regulations which means they have to provide escape routes without the aid of an external agent.
- 5.7 The Clerk commented that there would be a sense of loss and the sense of an increased risk in whichever area lost its ALP. However, the decision should be based on the response time and the areas with the highest risks; Members had been given the evidence to help them decide. The Clerk also advised that it was important that an operational explanation of the evidence was available to the public, together with the level of risk and how the risks would be managed, in order for them to be able to understand the reasoning behind the final decision made.
- 5.8 Cllr T Roberts asked for confirmation that an ALP located in Rhyl would cover the majority of PDAs (pre-determined attendances) in the Conwy county and vice-versa. ACFO Claydon confirmed that an ALP based in Rhyl would cover Llandudno but not the Conwy Valley and that having an ALP based in Llandudno would mean that Rhyl would be covered by the 30-minute standard but not the Talacre and Mostyn Dock areas.

- 5.9 The Chair asked Cllr M Thomas to repeat his earlier proposal for voting purposes. Cllr M Thomas proposed Bangor, Wrexham and Llandudno as the three locations. In favour: 3 (Cllr M Thomas, Cllr W P Roberts and Cllr G James); against: 6.
- 5.10 Cllr L W Davies then proposed Bangor, Wrexham and Rhyl as the three locations due to Rhyl being more central and also covering a wider population and a more industrial area especially towards the East. In favour: 6; against 3 (Cllr M Thomas, Cllr W P Roberts and Cllr G James).
- 5.11 **RESOLVED, by a majority vote, to recommend to the March Authority meeting, that the remaining three ALPs be based at Bangor, Wrexham and Rhyl.**
- 6 REVENUE BUDGET 2012/13 AND PROGRESS TOWARDS ACHIEVING THE REQUIRED SAVINGS
- 6.1 The Deputy Chief Fire Officer introduced the report which provided confirmation that the Authority's revenue budget for 2012/13 would be £32million as set out at the December 2011 Authority meeting.
- 6.2 The report also formed part of the regular reporting mechanism to the Executive Panel of the progress towards achieving the required savings as directed by the Fire and Rescue Authority in December 2010. The Deputy Chief Fire Officer reminded Members that the saving required in 2012/13 was £815,000 and that £500,000 of that would be saved by introducing a new rostering system.
- 6.3 The Deputy Chief Fire Officer gave Members an update on the progress of introducing a new rostering system. FBU representatives and officers had worked well together with meetings being open, frank and realistic. Representative bodies had consulted with their members and having received feedback it had been agreed to develop a rostering system that will be unique to North Wales and one that would seek to reconcile the needs of both parties.
- 6.4 Throughout January 2012, firefighters across the Service had received a presentation delivered by a member of the team that had developed the model, an FBU representative and a senior manager. An official FBU meeting is due to be held during the week commencing 6th February 2012 to hopefully progress the matter in order for the new system to be introduced on 1st April 2012.
- 6.5 Officers and FBU representatives wanted to maintain as many posts as possible, and had therefore agreed to work on the basis of having 22 fewer posts. This on its own would not achieve the savings required, and it had been agreed to introduce fixed training days which would mean that people would not have to undertake training on their rota

days. This would save an additional £150,000 per year in overtime payments. Negotiations are also ongoing to identify ways of losing posts not people.

6.6 Members commended the officers and the FBU representatives for working together so well.

6.7 **RESOLVED to note the progress towards making the required financial savings in the current year and the confirmation of the draft revenue budget for 2012/13.**

7 DISCRETIONAL COMPENSATION FOR THE EARLY TERMINATION OF EMPLOYMENT

7.1 ACFO Simmons presented the report which provided information on progress in the development of a locally agreed policy on the exercise of discretionary powers in respect of compensation for the early termination of employment for firefighters.

7.2 Members were reminded that at the December 2011 Authority meeting, they had agreed in principle to seek a local agreement to apply the same discretionary power to compensate employees under the Firefighters' Pension Scheme 1992 (FPS) 1992 and the New Firefighters' Pension Scheme 2007 (NFPS) 2007 as is afforded to employees who are members of the Local Government Pension Scheme.

7.3 Firefighters eligible may be members of either the FPS, the NFPS or those employees eligible to join such schemes. Members were asked to approve the Scheme's specific details as outlined in the report.

7.4 ACFO Simmons explained the basis of the calculation for the enhanced severance scheme and that the maximum payable would be £40,560 for those aged 61 with 20 years' service.

7.5 Cllr M Ll Davies asked about the £800,000 figure stated in the local newspaper. The Treasurer explained that the estimated figure of £800,000 required to fund the scheme was based on 22 people aged 61 with 20 years' service. However, it was envisaged that it would be individuals aged between 50 and 55 years that would be applying for the scheme and the maximum payment for 20 years' service within that age bracket would be £36,500.

7.6 Members noted that it would be a one-off voluntary severance scheme and that each application would be judged on its own merit and that it would not be a precedent for any future policy. It was also confirmed that the lawyers had scrutinised the North Wales Fire Service (Combination Scheme) Order 1995 and confirmed that there was no conflict.

7.7 The Chief Fire Officer reminded Members that it was at their request that the voluntary severance scheme was being developed, as Members wanted to ensure firefighters considering early termination of employment were given a fair deal.

7.8 Members congratulated officers on the work that had been done. Members again reiterated that redundancy was an option everyone would prefer to avoid, but in the circumstances were grateful to all those working on the difficult issue.

7.9 **RESOLVED to approve the locally agreed voluntary severance scheme, including the specific criteria of that scheme, for those employees who are members of the FPS or NFPS or those employees eligible to join such schemes.**

8 PERFORMANCE MONITORING

8.1 The Corporate Planning Manager introduced the Performance Monitoring report covering the first three quarters of the financial year 2011/12. It was pleasing to note that there had been an improvement in all performance areas.

8.2 The following points were highlighted:

- 161 fewer fires compared to the same period in 2010/11
- a decrease of 30% in chimney fires - this could be partly attributed to the milder weather conditions
- 20 people suffered injuries requiring hospital treatment compared to 35 people in 2010/11
- 61% of homes that had a fire had a smoke alarm that activated. 14% of dwelling fires had no alarm fitted which is a decrease of 2% compared to last year
- the main reason for alarms not actuating despite being fitted in the property was that the fire was not close enough to the detector to trigger the alarm
- the number of false alarms incidents attended continued to fall, a 9% decrease compared to the same period in 2010/11. Cllr M Ll Davies thanked the Control Room staff for continuing to challenge false alarm calls.

8.3 **RESOLVED to note the performance information provided.**

9 FIRE AND RESCUE NATIONAL FRAMEWORK FOR 2012 ONWARDS

9.1 The Deputy Chief Fire Officer informed Members about the Welsh Government's consultation on a proposed new Fire and Rescue National Framework for 2012 onwards. The document builds on previous work done and mirrors what is taking place in other areas of

local government and how the fire and rescue service fits with government policy.

- 9.2 Two matters were highlighted in the document as “ongoing issues” - dwelling fire response standards and the development of single integrated plans through Local Service Boards. These issues were not covered in detail in the document due to the timing of the consultation.
- 9.3 Members also noted that the framework sets out the three results the WG expects the FRAs to achieve:
- to further reduce the incidence of fires, deaths and injuries resulting from fire, and the resultant cost/impact of fires to the economy and society;
 - to further reduce deaths and injuries from road traffic collisions;
 - to be recognised by partners (including local authorities, police authorities and the health service) and the community as being key stakeholders in delivering wider improvements for environmental and societal change.
- 9.4 Six priorities were listed around collaboration, greater efficiency, shared services, reviewing partnerships, maintaining service levels, active management of performance and identifying innovative and new ways of working using talent and expertise within the FRAs.
- 9.5 The Clerk noted that a review of collaboration and partnership work had already taken place in North Wales; the Clerk also considered it important that the framework did not compromise the objectives of the Service. The Treasurer commented that the Authority was already operating numerous shared services, with Joint Communications Centre, property services, financial services and the clerk services all being examples of joint working.
- 9.6 **RESOLVED to note the information provided and delegate authority to the Chair, in conjunction with the Chief Fire Officer, to submit a response to the consultation on behalf of the Authority.**

10 ANNUAL IMPROVEMENT REPORT

- 10.1 Alan Morris from the Wales Audit Office attended the meeting to introduce the Wales Audit Office's Annual Improvement Report assessing how well the Authority is planning for improvement and delivering its services.
- 10.2 Overall the Auditor General had concluded that the Authority has good arrangements in place to deliver improvements, the budget continued to be well managed and the Authority had communicated with key groups to specifically target those that most need HFSCs.

- 10.3 Alan Morris explained that the Authority's planning, evaluation and reporting of performance could be enhanced by being more balanced and outcome focused. Plans were in place for the Wales Audit Office to work with FRAs to assist with this issue.
- 10.4 Cllr James asked how the Authority could do more to reduce motorcycle accidents when it was not a statutory duty for the Authority. The Chief Fire Officer explained that officers would be meeting with representatives from the Wales Audit Office to discuss this issue further in order to get a greater level of understanding on both sides. It was recognised that the Service's contribution to road accidents involving cars/lorries was self-evident, i.e. the use of extrication techniques which can have an impact on the survivability of victims. However, with motorcycle accidents there is no need for extrication and therefore difficult to see how the increase/decrease of motorcycle accidents could be the responsibility of the fire and rescue authorities. Cllr M Thomas agreed and stated that it should not be the Authority's responsibility to teach people how to drive motorcycles. Cllr Thomas was also concerned that many of the motorcyclists came from outside of North Wales having seen articles in motorcycle magazines promoting various routes in the area.
- 10.5 It was noted that the wording on page 18, second bullet point needed to be amended - 12 posts relating to ALPs had been discontinued not 12 ALPs.
- 10.6 **RESOLVED to note the Annual Improvement Report and the information discussed at the meeting.**

PART II

- 11 PROPOSED PURCHASE OF THE FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE HEADQUARTERS BUILDING
- 11.1 Members were provided with details of a proposal regarding the potential purchase of the Service's headquarters building.
- 11.2 The Deputy Chief Fire Officer explained that the lease on the building expired in 2015 and that an investment appraisal had been undertaken to enable a comparison of the options available to ascertain the most cost effective method of retaining the use of the building by NWFRS.
- 11.3 The outcome of the appraisal was that purchasing the building would provide better value for money than the rental option. This is due to the fact that the asset would be owned by the Authority at the end of the 25 years and would therefore form part of the investment appraisal whereas with the renting option there would be no asset at the end of

the period. It was noted that the Authority is currently responsible for maintenance costs of the building.

11.4 RESOLVED to

- (i) note details of the preferred option as outlined in the report;**
- (ii) endorse the proposal to proceed with purchasing the headquarters building subject to a valuation from a Chartered Valuer.**