

NORTH WALES FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY

Minutes of the meeting of North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority held on Monday 19 December 2016 at Flintshire County Council Chamber, Mold. Meeting commenced at 10.30am.

PRESENT

<u>Councillor</u>	<u>Representing</u>
M LI Davies (Chair)	Denbighshire County Council
P R Lewis (Deputy Chair)	Conwy County Borough Council
B Cowie	Denbighshire County Council
A I Dunbar	Flintshire County Council
A Evans	Wrexham County Borough Council
J G Evans	Anglesey County Council
A M Jones	Gwynedd Council
R O Jones	Anglesey County Council
G Lowe	Wrexham County Borough Council
Cllr D MacRae	Conwy County Borough Council
H McGuill	Flintshire County Council
Cllr R E Parry	Conwy County Borough Council
P Pemberton	Wrexham County Borough Council
W P Shotton	Flintshire County Council
J R Skelland	Wrexham County Borough Council
W O Thomas	Flintshire County Council
J Vaughan	Conwy County Borough Council
Cllr G G Williams	Gwynedd Council
D Wisinger	Flintshire County Council

Also present:

S A Smith (Chief Fire Officer and Chief Executive); C Everett (Clerk and Monitoring Officer); D Docx (Deputy Chief Fire Officer and Interim Treasurer); R Fairhead and G Brandrick (Assistant Chief Fire Officers); G Roberts (Temporary Senior Professional and Service Standards Manager); S Millington (Senior Fire Safety Manager); C Nott (Temporary Training and Development Manager); K Roberts (Senior Operations Manager); S Morris (Corporate Planning Manager); S Forrest (Accountant, Conwy County Borough Council); T Williams (Corporate Communications Manager); A Davies (Member Liaison Officer) and S Jones (Member Liaison Assistant).

APOLOGIES

<u>Councillor</u>	<u>Representing</u>
L W Davies	Anglesey County Council
B Dunn	Flintshire County Council
M Holland	Denbighshire County Council
W R Owen	Gwynedd Council
W T Owen	Gwynedd Council
P Prendergast	Denbighshire County Council
A Tansley	Conwy County Borough Council
D Taylor	Wrexham County Borough Council

The Chief Fire Officer informed members of temporary changes within the principal officers' team and the area managers' team. Members asked that their best wishes be conveyed to Mrs Ruth Simmons.

1 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

1.1 There were no declarations of interest.

2 MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 19 SEPTEMBER 2016

2.1 The minutes of the Fire and Rescue Authority meeting held on 19 September were submitted for approval.

2.2 **RESOLVED to approve minutes of the meeting as a true and correct record.**

3 MATTERS ARISING

3.1 There were no matters arising.

4 URGENT MATTERS

4.1 Cllr P Pemberton had made a request to ask a question and it was agreed that this request be approved and discussed at the end of the meeting.

5 CHAIR'S REPORT

5.1 The report listed meetings and events attended by Cllr M Ll Davies and Cllr P R Lewis in their roles of Chair and Deputy Chair of North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority between September and December 2016.

5.2 The Chair commented that the emergency services' carol service had been well attended and thanked the organisers and performers for making it an excellent evening.

5.3 Cllr P Shotton referred to the Phoenix ceremonies of achievement and that it was very pleasing to see a group of young people with additional needs being given the opportunity to take part and that it had been inspiring to see their efforts and presentation at the end of their week with the Phoenix team; Members again reiterated their thanks to the Service for delivering the Phoenix programme. The CFO explained that work was ongoing to expand the target audience being invited to take part in the course.

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

6 MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY 2017-2020 AND BUDGET 2017/18

6.1 The Interim Treasurer presented the report which sought members' approval for the Authority's medium term financial strategy for 2017-2020 and also the budget for 2017/18. A letter from the Cabinet Secretary, Carl Sargeant, was tabled at the meeting.

- 6.2 Members were reminded of the Authority's statutory duty to set a balanced budget and the work that had been done by the improvement planning working group to draw up improvement objectives for consultation which included the revised objective around closing the three year estimated gap of £2.3m in funding for the Service.
- 6.3 In order to ensure a balanced budget for 2017/18 the contributions from the constituent authorities would need to increase by £1.7m, or 5.3% higher than the 2016/17 contributions. It was noted that this increase is due to budgetary pressures facing the Authority in 2017/18.
- 6.4 In terms of using reserves to underpin the budget, members were reminded that it was considered prudent to retain 3% of the Authority's total budget in general reserves. The report detailed the anticipated usable revenue reserves as at 31 March 2017; the reserves available for general use are currently estimated to be £2.16m and current estimates show that £0.537m will be utilised to underpin the 2016/17 budget. Therefore, given the available reserves it would be feasible to partly underpin the budget for 2018/19 whilst retaining some reserves for future years as recommended.
- 6.5 Following an extensive discussion, with members having the opportunity to consider several issues in detail and express concerns about the budgetary pressures facing the Fire and Rescue Authority as well as their constituent authorities due to continued reductions in funding from WG and central government, the following proposal was made by the Deputy Chair and seconded by Cllr J Vaughan:
- 'to increase local authority contributions by 4% for 2017/18 and the remaining 1.3%, if required, in 2018/19'.
- 6.6 This proposal was put to the vote and the result was as follows: for – 17; 1 against and 1 abstention.
- 6.7 The proposal would enable the Authority to set a balanced budget, using some reserves to underpin the budget for 2017/18 but would also mean that the Authority would have reserves available for 2018/19 should they be required.
- 6.8 In addition, the Clerk suggested that the Authority request temporary assistance from the WG in the form of a supplementary grant; this would highlight to Ministers the budgetary constraints facing the Authority.
- 6.9 **RESOLVED to**
- (i) approve the budget for 2017/18;**
 - (ii) increase local authority contributions by 4% for 2017/18 and the remaining 1.3%, if required, in 2018/19;**
 - (iii) use some reserves to underpin the budget for 2017/18 whilst maintaining a minimum of 3% in the general reserves fund;**

- (iv) **apply for a supplementary grant from the WG;**
- (v) **agree that should any savings transpire before 15 February 2017 the powers for altering the budget level downwards be delegated to the Interim Treasurer in consultation with the Chair, Chief Fire Officer and Clerk.**

10 PROVISIONAL OUTTURN 2016/2017

- 10.1 The Interim Treasurer presented the report which gave an estimated provisional outturn for the financial year 2016-17. The report provided actual expenditure information up until the end of November and the estimated expenditure for the remaining four months of the financial year.
- 10.2 Currently, the indications are that there will be no underspend and £536,617 of reserves will be needed to support the budget for 2016/17. During the budget setting process it was estimated that £760,417 of reserves would be required in order to set a balanced budget.
- 10.3 The majority of the budget, 70%, relates to pay and members were informed that there are indications of a net overspend on pay this year. This is due to various in-year reviews that have been held and the resulting changes implemented including:
- employing wholetime firefighters on wholetime duty system rural contracts along with a number of firefighter apprentices which has resulted in increased fire cover availability across North Wales and more hours being covered than originally anticipated due to long term sickness and RDS availability
 - staff with specialist skills being employed on fixed term contracts to deliver on a number of key transformational projects including the new command and control system
 - transfer of some finance work to Conwy CBC during the year, resulting in some members of support staff being offered redundancy; the cost of the redundancy payments will be recovered by savings in staffing costs next year.
- 10.4 It was also noted that additional costs had been incurred on the occupational health budget due to the need to provide additional medical screening for firefighters in line with a new requirement by the Health and Safety Executive to test for signs of asbestosis.
- 10.5 **RESVOLED to note the financial position of the Authority.**

- 11 MEMBERSHIP OF IMPROVEMENT PLAN WORKING GROUP
- 11.1 Members were asked to agree the membership of the improvement plan (IP) working group.
- 11.2 **RESOLVED to**
- (i) **agree that the full membership of the Executive Panel becomes the membership of the IP working group;**
 - (ii) **note the dates of the IP working group meetings as follows:
Monday 6 February, 2pm;
Monday 6 March; 2pm.**
- 12 FIREFIGHTERS PENSION SCHEMES LOCAL PENSION BOARD – ANNUAL REPORT 2015/16
- 12.1 The DCFO presented the annual report of the Authority's local pension board (LPB) which details the work of the board during its first year. The LPB was established in accordance with the Public Service Pensions Act 2013 and the Firefighters' Pension Scheme (Amendment) (Governance) Regulations 2015.
- 12.2 The DCFO explained that the role and remit of the LPB is to assist the Authority in its capacity as scheme manager by making sure it is administering the firefighters' pension scheme effectively and efficiently and, in doing so, is complying with relevant laws and regulations. In order to improve transparency, the LPB's annual report needs to be approved for publication.
- 12.3 The DCFO thanked members of the LPB for their work which has required developing a knowledge and understanding of the various firefighters' pension schemes and undertaking regular training. The Chair also thanked members of the LPB on behalf of the Authority.
- 12.4 **RESOLVED to approve the local pension board annual report 2015-16 for publication on the Authority's website.**
- 13 MEETING DATES 2017
- 13.1 The Clerk presented the report which informed members of the dates of meetings for the full Authority, Executive Panel and Audit Committee for 2017.
- 13.2 **RESOLVED to note the dates of meetings as follows:**
- Authority meetings, 10.30am**
Monday 20 March 2017 – Wrexham
Monday 19 June 2017 – Conwy
Monday 18 September 2017 – Gwynedd
Monday 18 December 2017 – Flintshire

Executive Panel meetings, 10am, HQ

Monday 13 February 2017

Monday 17 July 2017

Monday 23 October 2017

Audit Committee, 2pm, HQ

Monday 30 January 2017

Monday 5 June 2017

Monday 11 September 2017

- 14 STATUTORY DUTY TO RESPOND TO FLOODING AND OTHER WATER RELATED EMERGENCIES
- 14.1 ACFO Brandrick presented the report which informed members of the proposal by WG to place a statutory duty on fire and rescue authorities to respond to flooding and other water related emergencies. The report also contained the Authority's draft consultation response for members' approval.
- 14.2 Members were reminded that there was currently no statutory duty for FRAs to respond to flooding and other water related emergencies. The WG is now proposing to use its power under section 9 of the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004 to amend the Fire and Rescue Services (Emergencies) (Wales) Order 2007 to include the duty to make provision for:
- (a) the purpose of rescuing people, or protecting them from serious harm in the event of flooding in its area and
 - (b) for the purpose of rescuing people from inland water in its area, where the situation is likely to cause one or more individuals to die, be seriously injured or become seriously ill.
- 14.3 Members considered the Authority's response and the various comments made in terms of the Service's previous experience of flooding events, resources required and the costs involved. Cllr Cowie commented that the Service had done tremendous work during the 2012 floods in St Asaph and on behalf of the residents of St Asaph he wished to put on record his thanks to the Service.
- 14.4 **RESOLVED to note the information and approve the consultation response for submission to the WG.**
- 15 WYLFA NEWYDD
- 15.1 The DCFO presented the report which informed members about the resourcing implications placed on NWFRS as a direct result of plans to develop a new nuclear power station at Wylfa, as well as the associated developments.
- 15.2 Regular reports will be presented to members detailing NWFRS' ongoing involvement with the project and all the connected developments. It was acknowledged that a project of this scale is unprecedented in North Wales and will impact all public services across the region.

- 15.3 Members agreed that it would be prudent for the Service to establish connections with developers early on in order to highlight any concerns during the planning phase and thereafter undertake business fire safety activity and community safety advice and education with the workforce. There will also be a significant amount of operational emergency planning and training involved. In view of these issues, members felt it was imperative that NWFRS correctly resources the project and therefore supported the secondment of a group manager to work full time on the Wylfa project.
- 15.4 In terms of the Authority's budget, members expressed concern that there was no separate budget line for this project and therefore costs incurred in terms of the secondment and other related work were currently being absorbed by the Authority; it was suggested that representations should be made to the developers about funding being provided to establish a fulltime team to work on fire safety related issues. The CFO explained that a business case has been presented to Horizon to request the recovery of costs associated with the additional workload implications.
- 15.5 Members also noted that the improvement plan working group will be considering the potential service implications and making recommendations to the Authority at its 2017 meetings.

At this juncture, Cllr A Evans and Cllr J Vaughan left the meeting.

15.6 **RESOLVED to**

- (i) note the implications of the Wylfa Newydd development for NWFRS and support the approach taken to correctly resource this important work;**
- (ii) resolve that the IPWG starts to consider the long term implications at its 2017 meetings.**

16 DEVELOPMENTS IN THE PROVISION OF NATIONAL RESILIENCE ASSETS WITHIN NORTH WALES

- 16.1 ACFO Fairhead presented the report which informed members of changes to the provision of national resilience assets in North Wales.
- 16.2 National resilience assets to deal with potential terrorist attacks in the UK were introduced following the 9/11 terrorist attacks in the United States. Recent national analysis has identified that the perceived risks across the UK have changed and due to the changing nature of terrorist attacks, fewer assets are required to deal with potential attacks. NWFRS currently has two incident response units but due to the outcome of the analysis the IRU located in Deeside is no longer required and will be removed by the end of this financial year. It was noted that there are no financial implications to the Service following removal of this vehicle and the equipment from the redundant vehicle will be held in stock for future training requirements.

16.3 **RESOLVED to note**

- (i) **the result of the analysis of the new planning assumptions and UK wide discussions about the disposition of IRUs;**
- (ii) **that the IRU from Deeside will be taken out of Service before the end of this financial year.**

17 TREASURER TO THE AUTHORITY

17.1 The Clerk presented the report which informed members of the outcome of the recruitment process for the role of Treasurer to the Authority.

17.2 **RESOLVED to**

- (i) **note the appointment process;**
- (ii) **approve the appointment of Mr Ken Finch to the post of treasurer with effect from 1 January 2017, the appointment being subject to successful contractual arrangements being agreed;**
- (iii) **contractual arrangements to be approved by the Chair of the Authority.**

18 MINUTES OF MEETINGS

18.1 The minutes of the following meetings were submitted for information:

- Audit Committee meeting held on 12 September 2016
- Executive Panel meeting held on 24 October 2016

18.2 **RESOLVED to note the minutes for information.**

19 ADDITIONAL MATTER

19.1 As agreed at the beginning of the meeting, Cllr P Pemberton was permitted to ask a question. The Clerk advised that under Standing Order 10, Questions:

“(2) A member of the Authority may:

(a) if three clear days notice in writing has been given to the proper officer, ask a Chair of any committee any question relating to business of the Authority;

(b) at the discretion of the Chair, put to him/her or to the Chair of any committee any question relating to an urgent matter, of which such notice has not been given, provided that a copy of such question has been handed to the proper officer before the start of the meeting.

(3) Every question shall be put and answered without discussion but the questioner may ask one supplementary question arising out of the reply.”

- 19.2 Cllr Pemberton's question was 'Could members of the Authority have sight of how many, and which, rural stations are down at any one time, on a regular basis or on demand. The reason for this is to judge for ourselves as members whether the system is working as it should and to give us reassurance that we have cover if the second pump in Wrexham disappears'.
- 19.3 The Chair asked the CFO to respond. Members were informed that it would be extremely difficult to provide the information requested. However, in the New Year, as part of the monitoring process of the new way of working in terms of having 20 pump available during the day and 38 at night, members will be receiving a regular report on whether this system is working. It was confirmed that to date, the Service is achieving that target every single day.