

NORTH WALES FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY

Minutes of the Executive Panel Meeting of the North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority held on 17th November 2008 at the Fire and Rescue Headquarters, St Asaph. Meeting commenced at 10am.

PRESENT

Cllr T Roberts (Chairman)	Gwynedd Council
Cllr S Frobisher (Vice-Chairman)	Denbighshire County Council
Cllr M Ll Davies	Denbighshire County Council
Cllr B Dunn	Flintshire County Council
Cllr P Jeffares	Wrexham County Borough Council
Cllr A M Jones	Anglesey County Council
Cllr E Morgan Jones	Gwynedd Council
Cllr W T Owen	Gwynedd Council
Cllr W P Roberts	Conwy County Borough Council
Cllr M Thomas	Conwy County Borough Council

OBSERVING:

Cllr D Mackie	Flintshire County Council
Cllr R Peacock	Conwy County Borough Council

ALSO PRESENT:

S A Smith (Chief Fire Officer and Chief Executive); K Finch (Treasurer); B Davies (Deputy Monitoring Officer); C Hanks (Deputy Chief Fire Officer); R Simmons (Assistant Chief Officer, Organisational and People Development); B Murphy (Senior Operations Manager); G Brandrick (Service Development Manager); S Morris (Corporate Planning Manager); T Williams (Corporate Communications Manager); S Forrest (Accountant, Treasurer's Department, Conwy County Borough Council); C Dingle (Finance Manager); Sian Jones (Members Liaison Assistant); A Davies (Member Liaison Officer).

Apologies:

Cllr G C Evans	Denbighshire County Council
Cllr T Evans	Wrexham County Borough Council
Cllr G James	Flintshire County Council
Cllr J V Owen	Anglesey County Council
C Everett	Clerk and Monitoring Officer
P S Claydon	Assistant Chief Fire Officer (Operational Assurance)
D Docx	Assistant Chief Officer (Resources)

1 NOTICE OF URGENT MATTERS

- 1.1 The Chief Fire Officer informed members that an elderly male had lost his life in a fire at his home in Llangollen in the early hours of the morning. A full investigation and analysis is to be undertaken to identify the cause of the fire.

2 MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON 22ND SEPTEMBER 2008

- 2.1 The minutes of the meeting held on 22nd September 2008 were approved as a true and correct record.

3 MATTERS ARISING

- 3.1 5.2 - Audit of financial statements 2007/08 (WAO) and letter of representation – the Treasurer confirmed that the accounts had been signed off without qualification. However, the issue of provisions is yet to be resolved. This matter had been raised by the Chairman and Chief Fire Officer at a meeting with the Minister for Social Justice and Local Government on 14th October and the Minister had noted the Authority's concerns.

- 3.2 11.1 (ii) – the Chief Fire Officer informed Members that the initial meeting of the fire cover and risk review working group had been held on Monday 10th November; it had been a productive and encouraging meeting.

- 3.3 12.7 – Fireguard Project – the Chief Fire Officer informed Members that he had received a letter confirming that the Fireguard Project had now fallen due to a lack of take-up by FRAs across England and Wales.

4 BUDGET OPTIONS FOR 2009/10

- 4.1 The paper was presented to reflect Members' request to have involvement in the draft budget rather than being presented with a report for approval at the Authority meeting in December.

- 4.2 Table A in the report described significant known budget pressures for 2009/10 and beyond. It was noted that some pressures were unavoidable but that other pressures could be deferred or met by other means. Table B showed the pressures that will inevitably impinge in future years; however, they may not affect the 2009/10 budget.

- 4.3 The Treasurer explained that a reassessment of employee costs had been undertaken to try and reflect the pressures that are likely to come because of Control and IC&T.

- 4.4 It was noted that more work could be done around inflation depending on price of fuel and other goods and services, which are affected by the changes in economic climate. Representations have been made to PWLB, requesting relaxations on the pay back of loans.
- 4.5 Members indicated that they would be looking for a budget increase of between 3% and 3.5% and also a realistic budget provision for the pay award, preferably, with no underpinning from Provisions.
- 4.6 The Deputy Chief Fire Officer confirmed that he would be reviewing the 5-year asset management programme to see if adjustments could be made to put less pressure on the budget.
- 4.7 In response to a Member's question about asking the Assembly for additional money to support the community fire safety checks, it was confirmed that the Assembly has been effective in giving money for this area of work and pays for all the smoke alarms. The Authority also makes regular bids by invitation for any additional money.
- 4.8 The Treasurer will send an email to the Financial Division outlining the pressures that are facing North Wales. He will also include comments about the community fire safety aspects.
- 4.9 **RESOLVED to note the pressures which will be reported to the Fire and Rescue Authority and the risk attached to each planning assumption.**

5 PROPOSED LOCAL GOVERNMENT (WALES) MEASURE

- 5.1 The paper was presented to inform members of the Welsh Assembly Government's proposed Local Government (Wales) Measure, and to present a draft response from the Authority to the consultation questions posed by the Assembly's Committee. The Measure will be implemented in April 2009.
- 5.2 Members thanked the Corporate Planning Manager for the report and for drafting the response. It was agreed to amend the response to include Members' concerns about additional costs and possible hidden costs that would be incurred as a result of the Measure.
- 5.3 The Chief Fire Officer informed Members that the Chief Fire Officer of Mid & West Wales, Richard Smith, would be representing the three Fire and Rescue Authorities to discuss the Measure further at an Assembly Committee. The Corporate Planning Manager would liaise with Mr Smith and possibly accompany him to the meeting.

- 5.4 **RESOLVED to**
(i) note the contents of the report; and
(ii) approve the draft response to the consultation questions subject to adding a paragraph on costs.

6 PERFORMANCE MONITORING

- 6.1 The paper was presented to provide Members with information relating to North Wales Fire and Rescue Service activity and performance, covering the period from 1st April 2008 to 30th September 2008. The Corporate Planning Manager led Members through the report.
- 6.2 It was noted that the number of calls the Fire and Rescue Service received regarding road traffic collisions had increased now that the Ambulance Service had agreed to pass on information they receive.
- 6.3 **RESOLVED to note the contents of the monitoring report.**

PART II

7 ARRANGEMENTS FOR APPOINTING TO THE POST OF DEPUTY CHIEF FIRE OFFICER/DEPUTY CHIEF OFFICER

- 7.1 The Chief Fire Officer reminded Members that interim arrangements had been in place for the post of Deputy Chief Fire Officer since Chris Enness' departure in May.
- 7.2 Following a discussion with the Chairman and Vice-Chairman, an advertisement had been placed early in November asking for expressions of interest for the application pack. It was noted that the advertisement was for a Deputy Chief Fire Officer **or** a Deputy Chief Officer. This would ensure that the post was not restricted to someone with an operational firefighter background.
- 7.3 The timescale for the recruitment process was tight in order for the Authority to ratify the appointment at its meeting on 15th December. Therefore, the closing date for applications is 21st November and candidates will be asked to complete an online psychometric test. Thereafter a shortlisting of suitable candidates will take place, and the interviews will be held on Tuesday 9th December at 11am.
- 7.4 Members felt that they should have received a paper due to the formality of the appointment. Officers noted this request for future reference.

7.5 **RESOLVED that one Member from each Local Authority would be on the interview panel as follows:**

Gwynedd – Cllr T Roberts
Denbighshire – Cllr S Frobisher
Conwy – Cllr M Thomas
Flintshire – Cllr B Dunn
Wrexham – Cllr P Jeffares
Anglesey – Cllr A M Jones

The meeting concluded at 12.10pm.

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

Signed: T.Roberts

Dated 02/02/09