

NORTH WALES FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY

Minutes of the Executive Panel meeting of the North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority held on Thursday, 6th March 2008 at Fire and Rescue Service Headquarters, St. Asaph. Meeting commenced at 10am.

Present:

Councillor

Representing

T Roberts (Chairman)

Gwynedd Council

E C George (Vice-Chairman)

Wrexham County Borough Council

J A MacLennan

Conwy County Borough Council

S Frobisher

Denbighshire County Council

J A Smith

Denbighshire County Council

E F Evans

Flintshire County Council

W T Owen

Gwynedd Council

G M Craddock

Wrexham County Borough Council

M Williams

Wrexham County Borough Council

J A Roberts

Ynys Môn County Council

Also present:

S A Smith (Chief Fire Officer and Chief Executive); J Kennedy (Deputy Monitoring Officer to the Authority); K W Finch (Treasurer to the Authority); C Enness (Deputy Chief Fire Officer); C Hanks (Assistant Chief Fire Officer, Service Support); P S Claydon (Assistant Chief Fire Officer, Service Delivery); D Docx (Assistant Chief Officer, Finance and Procurement); W A Murphy (Senior Operations Manager); G Brandrick (Service Development Manager); K Hughes (Senior Fire Safety Manager); M Hughes (Skills, Learning and Development Centre Manager); D Mottram (Executive Support Manager); T Williams (Corporate Communications Manager); L Gutierrez-Jones (HR Manager); S Fysh (Independent Member of the Standards Committee – observer) and Rh Evans (Member Liaison Officer).

PART I

1) Apologies

Councillor

Representing

J M Vaughan

Conwy County Borough Council

D Barratt

Flintshire County Council

E Morgan Jones

Gwynedd Council

W J Chorlton

Ynys Môn County Council

I R Miller

Clerk and Monitoring Officer to the Authority

2) Notice of Urgent Matters

Members were informed by the Chairman that no urgent items had been submitted to him or the Deputy Monitoring Officer for consideration.

Prior to the commencement of the meeting's business the Chief Fire Officer informed the Panel that it had recently been announced that the Service's Deputy Chief Fire Officer, Mr Chris Enness, had been appointed as the new Deputy Chief Fire Officer of Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Authority. A letter had been sent to all Authority members informing them of his appointment. Discussions were currently underway with Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Authority with a view to agreeing on a mutually convenient date for him to take-up his new post. Members joined the Chief Fire Officer in congratulating Mr Enness on his appointment and in wishing him well in his new post.

The Panel was informed by the Deputy Chief Fire Officer that the Service had recently undergone the Welsh Assembly Government's (WAG) Corporate Health Assessment. In 2007 the Service had been awarded the Silver Standard Corporate Health Award. This had been awarded on the condition that the Service was willing to aspire for the Gold Standard Award within 12 months. Members were advised that following an assessment, which took place on 21st February 2008, the Service had been awarded the Gold Standard. This Award recognised the Service's contribution in field of enhancing personnel's health and well-being in the workplace. The next step would be for the Service, within the next twelve months, to work towards upgrading the Gold Award to a Platinum Award – and become the first authority in Wales to bid for this level. The intention was for the Rhyl 1st project to be used as a catalyst for this bid.

With regards to the Rhyl 1st project members were advised by the Assistant Chief Fire Officer (Service Support) that confirmation had recently been received that the project had been awarded a £250K grant from the WAG's Department for the Economy and Transport's Town and Environmental Improvement Grant Scheme. Members and officers congratulated the Service's County Safety Manager for Denbighshire, Mr Alyn Edwards, and his team on their excellent work in securing this valuable funding. His work in relation to this project had recently been recognised with the 'Individual Contribution to Fire Safety Award' at the Service's Community Awards Ball.

Members were also informed that the joint winner of the above award, Mr Kevin Hughes, the Service's Senior Fire Safety Manager, would be retiring during May 2008. The Chairman advised members that he would be making an announcement about this and other matters at the Authority's meeting on 17th March 2008.

3) Minutes

The following minutes were submitted:

- i. Executive Panel meeting held on 5th February 2008

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

4) Matters Arising

The following matters arose from the minutes:

Pages 3 – Item 4 ‘Matters Arising’: the Vice-Chairman informed members that the sub-panel appointed to meet with the prospective new Clerk/Monitoring Officer to discuss the appointment had not yet been able to facilitate a meeting with the prospective office holder. The Chairman advised that a number of new dates had now been put forward for this meeting and that he would be requesting sub-panel members to agree on a convenient date at the conclusion of the present meeting.

Page 7 – Item 8, ‘Review of the Authority’s Policy on Re-employment of Members of the Firefighters’ Pension Scheme following Retirement’: members were advised by the Chief Fire Officer that a copy of the revised Policy had recently been circulated to all members as per the Panel’s request.

5) Proposals for inclusion in the Risk Reduction Plan Draft Action Plan 2009/10

The Assistant Chief Officer (Finance and Procurement) distributed copies to the Panel of the proposals which the Risk Reduction Plan (RRP) Working Group had agreed upon, at its meeting earlier that week, and which it would seek the Panel to recommend to the Fire and Rescue Authority on 17th March 2008 that it includes in its RRP draft Action Plan 2009/10. The Chairman explained to the Panel that the Working Group had received a detailed presentation and explanation on the proposal relating to officer cover review. On the issue of establishing a Working Group to undertake a fundamental review of the Service, members were advised that the Wales Audit Office (WAO) was shortly expected to publish its findings following its recent exercise on scrutiny and member engagement within the Authority. This report was likely to highlight the need for non-executive members to be more involved with the Authority’s work, possibly in a scrutiny capacity. The Panel:

Resolved: - that a report be prepared for submission to the Fire and Rescue Authority meeting on 17th March 2008 seeking the Authority to ratify the inclusion of the following proposals in its 2009/10 RRP draft Action Plan. The proposals being:

- i. **Proposal 1: to undertake an Officer Cover Review: by reviewing the way the Service provides supervisory cover by middle and senior managers at**

emergency incidents the Authority may be able to develop a 'dedicated response option' and provide 'operational assurance at incidents'. This would ensure that the necessary number of personnel maintain their operational competencies whilst the Authority would realise efficiencies for investment in other areas of the Service's work;

- ii. Proposal 2: that the dedicated Aerial Ladder Platform (ALP) crew member on each ALP is transferred into the Community Fire Safety (CFS) function to deliver CFS work. These operational personnel would continue to receive training and development opportunities in order to maintain their operational competencies so that they would be available to be called upon to undertake operational duties during spate or exceptional conditions;**
- iii. Proposal 3: to undertake a review of the existing catering arrangements on fire stations and at other Service establishments;**
- iv. Proposal 4: to establish a small working group consisting of members, officers and representatives from staff representative bodies to undertake a wide-ranging review into the standards of fire cover and other risks within the community; the resources available to the Service to address/respond to those risks and the location of those resources. The findings of this Working Group would form the basis of the Authority's next full RRP for 2010/2011.**

Prior to the commencement of the discussion on this item of business Councillor J A Roberts declared an interest as a relative of an officer, employed by North Wales Fire and Rescue Service, working the Flexible Duty System and providing operational officer cover. Consequently Councillor Roberts withdrew from the debate and the vote on the first proposal.

6) Draft Regulatory Plan 2007/08

Mr Rob Powell, Relationship Manager, from the Wales Audit Office (WAO) was welcomed to the meeting to present the Authority's Draft Regulatory Plan 2007/08 (previously circulated) to members. He introduced Mr Gilbert Lloyd, Engagement Partner, and Ms Catherine Griffiths, Audit Manager, both from KPMG the Authority's new external auditors, to members. The auditors then proceeded to explain to the Panel the contents of their report which detailed the various audits both the WAO and KPMG would be undertaking during the 2007/08 financial year. Replying to members' questions the auditors confirmed that the fees for their work with the Authority were consistent with the fees levied on the other fire and rescue authorities. Although the method by which audit fees were calculated did not take into account the below average Revenue Support Grant (RSG) settlement for local authorities in North Wales for the 2008/09 financial year, the fees had been set based on the audit planning required beforehand and the anticipated number of weeks over the twelve month period that audit staff would need to spend working in or with the Authority. The appointed auditors offered their assistance to the Authority in relation to the introduction and adoption of the CIPFA/SOLACE Governance Statement which would eventually subsume the current Statement of Internal

Control (SIC). Although the original intention had been to introduce the Statement for 2007/08, this had now been delayed. They also informed members that they would assist the Authority in establishing better scrutiny arrangements. Members:

Resolved: - to note the contents of the report.

7) Introduction of International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS) into the public sector

Mr Gilbert Lloyd, Engagement Partner from KPMG, informed the Panel of the impending introduction of the International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS). Local authorities had already postponed the introduction of the IRFS until 2010/11 but as the UK Whole of Government Accounts (WGA) had to be produced under the IRF standards from 2008/09 this would entail additional work for treasury staff at local authorities, including fire and rescue authorities, from 2009/10 onwards. He assured members that, as appointed auditors, they would assist the Authority with the introduction and the transition to this new accounting system. KPMG was well placed to assist the Authority with the process as it had already worked with companies in the private sector who had already adopted the IFR standards. Whilst answering members' questions Mr Lloyd confirmed that the introduction of the new standards would probably have financial implications for the Authority. It would therefore be advisable for the Authority to plan ahead in order to keep costs to a minimum. Mr Lloyd undertook to notify the Authority of when the new processes would start at the earliest available opportunity. He also assured members that they need not have any concerns about its introduction. Members:

Resolved: - to note the information presented.

The Chairman thanked Mr Powell, Mr Lloyd and Ms Griffiths for attending, presenting their reports and answering members' questions.

8) Performance Monitoring in 2008/09 – Draft Performance Indicators

The Assistant Chief Officer (Finance and Procurement) introduced her report and appendices (previously circulated) which informed members of the progress made to date in setting statutory Best Value Performance Indicators (BVPIs) for fire and rescue authorities in Wales. She detailed the contents of her report and drew members' attention to the draft BVPIs and to the letter of response sent on the Authority's behalf to the WAG's consultation on the proposed Fire and Rescue Authorities (Best Value Performance Indicators) (Wales) Order 2008, both of which were attached as appendices to the report. The Assistant Chief Officer informed the Panel that the Order was yet to be enacted. Replying to members' questions officers confirmed that the response sent to the WAG raised the Authority's concerns about various aspects of the draft Order and offered solutions to some of the issues highlighted. They also confirmed that, to date, no reply had been received from the WAG. However, the fact that the response

existed should in future assist the Authority if it felt it was being unfairly measured against any of the BVPIs. Members:

Resolved: - to note the progress made in setting Best Value Performance Indicators for Fire and Rescue Authorities in Wales with effect from 1st April 2008.

9) Urgent Matters

None.

PART II

No business.

Meeting concluded at 11.05am.

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

Signed: T. Roberts

Dated: 28/07/08