

NORTH WALES FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY
EXECUTIVE PANEL

Minutes of the **Executive Panel** of the North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority held on Monday 18 December 2023 at St Asaph Fire and Rescue Headquarters and virtually via Zoom. Meeting commenced at 14.30hrs.

Councillor

Cllr Dylan Rees (Chair)
Cllr Paul Cunningham (Deputy Chair)
Cllr Carol Beard
Cllr Alan Hughes
Cllr John Ifan Jones (left 15:39)
Cllr Gareth A Roberts
Cllr Rondo Roberts
Cllr Paul Rogers (left 15:12)
Cllr Gareth Sandilands
Cllr Dale Selvester
Cllr Rob Triggs

Representing

Ynys Môn County Council
Flintshire County Council
Conwy County Borough Council
Denbighshire County Council
Anglesey County Council
Gwynedd County Council
Wrexham County Council
Wrexham County Council
Denbighshire County Council
Flintshire County Council
Gwynedd Council

Also present:

Dawn Docx
Stuart Millington
Helen MacArthur
Anthony Jones
Dafydd Edwards
Tracey Williams
Gareth Owens
George Jones
Lisa Allington

Chief Fire Officer
Assistant Chief Fire Officer
Assistant Chief Fire Officer
Area Manager
Treasurer
Head of Corporate Communications
Clerk and Monitoring Officer
Atebol - Translator
Executive Assistant – Note Taker

1 APOLOGIES

Councillor

Cllr Chrissy Gee

Representing

Flintshire County Borough Council

ABSENT

Councillor

Cllr Chris Hughes

Representing

Conwy County Borough Council

2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

2.1 There were no declarations of interest to record.

3 NOTICE OF URGENT MATTERS

3.1 There was no notice of urgent matters.

4 MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 18 SEPTEMBER 2023

4.1 The minutes of the meeting held on 18 September 2023 were submitted for approval.

4.2 It was proposed and seconded, and therefore resolved to:

- i) approve the minutes as a true and correct record of the meeting held.**

5 MATTERS ARISING

5.1 With regards to item 8.5 (ii) of the minutes in relation to the Service's intention to publish a simple summary version of the key elements of the Annual Performance Assessment (APA), the Chair enquired, whether this had been done and Officers confirmed that it had.

5.2 With regards to item 9.8 in relation to the audit of the sickness absence review, ACFO MacArthur advised those present that MIAA, the Authority's external auditors, had carried out a Payroll and Attendance Management review and the arising report had been discussed in the Audit Committee meeting which had taken place this morning.

6. BUDGET SETTING 24/25

6.1 ACFO MacArthur presented the Budget Setting 24/25 paper to Members, the purpose of which was to provide an update on the current financial planning assessment to set a balanced budget for 2024/25, and to seek endorsement to confirm the indicative levy with constituent local authorities. The key areas were highlighted.

6.2 The Chair and the Treasurer gave thanks to ACFO MacArthur and the Members of the Budget Scrutiny Working Group for all of their work to date.

6.3 The Treasurer noted that there were a number of unavoidable costs which had been accounted for such as the rise in interest rates and general inflation, and that as a result of the work of the Budget Scrutiny Working Group, and the savings that they had identified, the levy had been reduced to 10.8% from the original figure of over 15%.

6.4 The Treasurer also noted that a further saving of £500,000 would be required should it be necessary to bring this down to below 10%.

6.5 ACFO MacArthur confirmed that the assumptions made with regards to the SCAPE grant from the Welsh Government for National Insurance contributions was reasonable.

6.6 A Member noted that the constituent councils were in a difficult financial position currently, and asked whether discussions had taken

place with financial leaders at constituent councils to make them aware of the amount of the levy. The Member further asked whether the need to invest in capital had also been considered.

6.7 The CFO responded that the Leaders and Chief Executives of each council had been met with as part of the Emergency Cover Review (ECR) consultation, and had been advised what the ECR meant for each of them alongside the budget setting process.

6.8 The CFO further noted that the Service would need to invest in capital in the future in order to fund a new Training Centre, something which was vital and required for health and safety reasons.

6.9 It was proposed and seconded, and therefore resolved to:

- i) Note the findings of the Budget Scrutiny Working Group, including the planning assumptions being used to develop the revenue budget for 2024/25;**
- ii) Note the current financial planning assessment of a budget requirement of £49.194m for 2024/25;**
- iii) Note the proposal to seek further work to identify opportunities for the further reductions in expenditure for the 2024/25 financial year and/or utilisation of reserves; and**
- iv) endorse the communication of the draft financial levy to each constituent local authority.**

7. PERFORMANCE MONITORING REPORT Q2 23-24

7.1 Area Manager Anthony Jones presented the Performance Monitoring Report for Quarter 2, 23/24 which provided information about incident activity during the first half (Q1 and Q2) of the 2023/24 financial year; performance in relation to the North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority's (the Authority) improvement and well-being objectives; and other notable incident activity.

7.2 It was highlighted to Members that there had been three accidental dwelling fire deaths during the first half of 2023/24 and the causes of these were noted.

7.3 Members noted that the Service's level of sickness absence did not compare favourably to public sector workers in general, and it was asked that a mechanism for comparing to other similar fire and rescue services be looked into.

7.4 A Member asked if there was a process in place for revisiting vulnerable occupants to check whether the smoke detectors fitted by the Service were still working. ACFO Millington confirmed that there were a variety of reasons for a smoke alarm not to be activated in the event of a fire; however, a reinspection programme was in place to revisit occupants who had had a device fitted to ensure that they were

still operating effectively. Furthermore, the devices fitted by the Service were now sealed units meaning that the entire device would have to be replaced once the battery had expired.

7.5 AM Anthony Jones confirmed that, following the Audit Wales report on attendance at Automatic Fire Alarms, steps had been taken to address the recommendations of the report with an action plan being developed. Methods of analysing data more effectively in this area were also being looked into.

7.6 A Member asked whether there were any trends relating to the increase in fires at HMP Berwyn, and AM Anthony Jones responded that not all incidents at the prison were attended, but those that were were thoroughly investigated. Prisoners who deliberately set fires were also subject to an extended sentence as a result. The prevention and protection team were also working closely with the prison to educate inmates.

7.7 It was further asked if work with other partnership agencies remained ongoing in relation to the issues around the Pontcysyllte Viaduct and the recent increase in people taking their own lives at that location.

7.7 ACFO Millington confirmed that work remained ongoing with partner agencies in this area, and that of similar issues at the Menai Bridge.

7.8 It was proposed and seconded and therefore resolved to:

i) note the content of the performance monitoring report.

8. STRATEGIC RISK MANAGEMENT

8.1 AM Anthony Jones presented the Strategic Risk Management paper which provided Members with a mid-year update on the content of the Authority's strategic risk register in accordance with the Strategic Risk Management Policy.

8.2 The Chair confirmed that a meeting had recently taken place between himself and AM Anthony Jones to review the Risk Register. It was highlighted to Members that the Service had now achieved the Cyber Essentials (CE) qualification and that work remained ongoing towards the Cyber Essentials Plus (CE+) qualification; however, there were indications that the CE+ qualification may be replaced at some stage in the future.

8.3 It was proposed and seconded and therefore resolved to:

i) note the identified strategic risks that are facing the Authority following mid-year review.

9. HEALTHY TRAVEL CHARTER

9.1 ACFO Millington presented the Healthy Travel Charter paper which set out for Members of the Authority the obligations as prescribed in the North Wales Healthy Travel Charter, and the practical considerations of implementing them.

9.2 It was proposed and seconded and therefore resolved to:

- i) endorse the ratification of the North Wales Healthy Travel Charter, for consideration at a future meeting of the Authority, under the following terms:**
 - The Chief Fire Officer (CFO) be delegated to sign the Charter on behalf of the Authority;**
 - The Environment and Climate Change Manager be designated the Single Point of Contact (SPoC) for the scheme; and**
 - Compliance reporting to the Flintshire and Wrexham Public Service Board to be made by ACFO Stuart Millington.**

10 CHANGES TO THE CONSTITUTION - DELEGATION OF POWERS

10.1 Gareth Owens, Clerk and Monitoring Officer, presented the proposed changes to the constitution which sought to include within the Constitution a standing delegation of powers from the end of office of the present Members of the Authority to the first meeting of the Authority following elections.

10.2 The Clerk provided Members with the rationale behind these changes, this being to ensure that during the short period between the elections and the Annual Meeting of the Authority where there will be no office holders, and if during which time the Authority needs to act, that powers be delegated to the Chief Fire Officer (CFO) in respect of a decision which cannot be delayed.

10.3 It was proposed and seconded and therefore resolved to:

- i) delegate all the powers of the Authority, its committees and its office holders to the CFO, in consultation with the Clerk and Treasurer, for the period between ordinary elections and the first meeting of the Authority thereafter;**
- ii) these delegations shall apply only so far as such powers relate to decisions that cannot reasonably be delayed until the date of that first meeting; and**
- iii) that this delegation be recorded in the Authority's constitution.**

11 URGENT MATTERS

11.1 There were no urgent matters to raise.

Meeting closed: 15:45 hrs