

## **NORTH WALES FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY**

Minutes of the meeting of **North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority** held on **Monday 17 July 2023** in St Asaph Fire and Rescue Headquarters and virtually via **Zoom**. Meeting commenced at **09.45hrs**.

### **Councillor**

Dylan Rees (Chair)  
Paul Cunningham (Deputy Chair)  
Bryan Apsley  
Marion Bateman  
Carol Beard  
Tina Claydon  
Adele Davies-Cooke  
Jeff Evans  
Alan Hughes  
Chris Hughes  
John Brynmor Hughes  
John Ifan Jones  
Marc Jones  
Gwynfor Owen  
Arwyn Herald Roberts  
Austin Roberts  
Gareth A Roberts  
Rondo Roberts  
Gareth Sandilands  
Nigel Smith  
Rob Triggs  
Michelle Walker  
Mark Young

### **Representing**

Anglesey County Council  
Flintshire County Council (arrived 9:35)  
Wrexham County Borough Council  
Flintshire County Council  
Conwy County Borough Council  
Flintshire County Council  
Flintshire County Council  
Anglesey County Council  
Denbighshire County Council  
Conwy County Borough Council  
Gwynedd Council  
Anglesey County Council  
Wrexham County Borough Council  
Gwynedd Council  
Gwynedd Council  
Conwy County Borough Council  
Gwynedd Council  
Wrexham County Borough Council (left 11:10)  
Denbighshire County Council  
Conwy County Borough Council  
Gwynedd Council  
Denbighshire County Council  
Denbighshire County Council

### **Also present:**

Dawn Docx  
Stewart Forshaw  
Helen MacArthur  
Stuart Millington  
Anthony Jones  
Dafydd Edwards  
Gareth Owens  
Lisa Allington  
Helen Howard  
Tracey Williams  
Dafydd Evans  
Osian Jones

Chief Fire Officer (CFO)  
Deputy Chief Fire Officer (DCFO)  
Assistant Chief Fire Officer (ACFO)  
Assistant Chief Fire Officer (ACFO)  
Area Manager (AM)  
Treasurer  
Clerk and Monitoring Officer  
Executive Assistant  
Head of Finance and Procurement  
Head of Corporate Communications  
BBC  
BBC

## 1 APOLOGIES

### **Councillor**

Beverley Parry-Jones

### **Representing**

Wrexham County Borough Council

### **ABSENT**

### **Councillor**

Chrissy Gee

Paul Rogers

Dale Selvester

### **Representing**

Flintshire County Council

Wrexham County Borough Council

Flintshire County Council

The above apologies were offered and accepted. It was noted that Cllr Chrissy Gee, Cllr Paul Rogers and Cllr Dale Selvester were all absent without apology.

## 2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

- 2.1 Cllrs Paul Cunningham, Jeff Evans and Rob Triggs declared an interest in Item 13, Local Pension Board Annual Report 2022/23, as they were in receipt of pensions on which the Local Pension Board advises.

## 3 NOTICE OF URGENT MATTERS

- 3.1 There was no notice of urgent matters.

## 4 MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 17 APRIL 2023

- 4.1 The minutes of the meeting held on 17 April 2023 were submitted for approval.

### 4.2 **RESOLVED to:**

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

## 5 MATTERS ARISING

- 5.1 CFO Docx updated the meeting with regards to paragraph 7.7, in relation to firefighter pay awards and potential industrial action. It was confirmed that, at the recent Social Partnership Forum, there had been a discussion around the budget and the Welsh Government had confirmed that there would be no additional funding given to Fire and Rescue Services in Wales towards the recent pay award.

- 5.2 It was noted that, in relation to paragraph 8.2 regarding the provisional outturn 2022/23, the final accounts would now be presented at the October Fire Authority meeting.
- 5.3 Members were asked to note that in paragraph 9.4 of the minutes, the annual review of the authority's corporate plan 2021-24, it was advised that a report on Automatic Fire Alarms (AFA)'s would be formally presented to Members of the North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority (the Authority) at this meeting. However, this presentation would now take place at the October FRA meeting.
- 5.4 In relation to paragraph 11.3, pay policy statement 2023-24, a paper would be going to the Audit Committee in September.

## **6 EMERGENCY COVER REVIEW**

- 6.1 DCFO Forshaw presented the Emergency Cover Review (ECR) paper which aimed to provide Members with an update on the progress of the Emergency Cover Review since the last progress report, which was presented to the Authority on 17 April 2023.
- 6.2 The paper also sought to confirm with Members the process and timescales for the Authority's public consultation on the future of emergency cover for the communities of North Wales.
- 6.3 Furthermore, confirmation was requested from the Authority on the options to be included within the public consultation.
- 6.5 One Member noted that he was surprised by the statement that Option 3 did not have the support of the Chief Fire Officer, as they thought that all of the options had the support of Officers.
- 6.6 The Chief Fire Officer clarified that the reasons for her reservations around Option 3 was that this option does not meet the objectives of the ECR, which were to ensure that the communities of North Wales were being provided with a service that they could have confidence in. This involved making sure that resources were in the right place to be able to deliver a timely response with the right skills. As Option 3 was based primarily on financial considerations, and does not improve Emergency Cover during the day, it was for this reason that the CFO could not give her professional support to it.
- 6.7 The Chair further confirmed that Officers would support whichever option Members decided to take to consultation.
- 6.8 It was resolved to move to a Part II discussion on this item and as such, all observers present were asked to leave.

## **PART II**

- 6.9 A point of order was clarified in that this discussion was about which options Members would like to take forward for consultation at this stage. It was impressed upon Members that this was a very important decision and so it was essential for all to have the opportunity to comment or ask questions.
- 6.10 It was acknowledged that this was a difficult matter for Members.
- 6.11 Members were reminded that they represent the Authority and therefore have a responsibility to ensure a sufficient level of service whilst at the same time, not overburdening local tax payers. It was suggested that taking all three options forwards to consultation would show that the Authority were serious about listening to the views of the public.
- 6.12 An in-depth and detailed discussion was held around the three options outlined, and their advantages and disadvantages.
- 6.14 It was confirmed that the consultation would be launched on Friday 21 July 2023 with an online questionnaire. This would also be available in paper format, with additional resources such as flyers, posters and easy-read formats available on the website and for distribution. There were also planned drop-in roadshows across each Authority.
- 6.13 Members agreed that it should be for the public to decide which options were the best for them. It was therefore proposed that all three options should proceed to consultation. This proposal was seconded with a majority in favour.
- 6.14 **RESOLVED to:**  
**i) commence a public consultation around options of 1, 2 and 3**

It was agreed to move to a comfort break at 11:06

Part I meeting recommenced 11:15

## **7 CHAIR'S REPORT**

- 7.1 It was noted that a written paper had been supplied for this meeting to provide Members with information on the meetings and events attended by the Chair and Deputy Chair of the North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority (the Authority) in their official capacities between April 2023 and June 2023.
- 7.2 The Chair encouraged Members to attend the Phoenix celebrations if they were at all able, as they were very inspiring events.

- 7.3 **RESOLVED to:**  
i) **note the information provided.**

## **8 INTERNAL AUDIT ARRANGEMENTS FROM APRIL 2023**

8.1 ACFO MacArthur presented the Internal Audit Arrangements from April 2023 paper, which aimed to outline to Members confirmation of the appointment of Mersey Internal Audit Agency as North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority's (the Authority) internal auditor for the period 1 April 2023 – 31 March 2026.

- 8.2 **RESOLVED to:**  
i) **Note the appointment of Mersey Internal Audit Agency as the Authority's internal audit providers for the financial period 1 April 2023-31 March 2026.**

## **9 TREASURY MANAGEMENT ACTIVITY AND ACTUAL PRUDENTIAL INDICATORS FOR 2022/2023**

9.1 Dafydd Edwards, Treasurer, presented the Treasury Management Activity and Actual Prudential Indicators for 2022/2023 paper, which aimed to inform Members of the treasury management activity and prudential indicators for North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority (the Authority) during the 2022/23 financial year. This report is a requirement of the Prudential Code (the Code).

- 9.2 **RESOLVED to:**  
i) **note the treasury management activity; and**  
ii) **approve the final prudential indicators for 2022/23.**

## **10 INTERNAL AUDIT ANNUAL REPORT 2022/23**

10.1 ACFO Helen MacArthur presented the Internal Audit Annual Report 2022/23 paper, which informed Members that, under the terms of the Accounts and Audit (Wales) Regulations 2014 Part 3 5. (2), the North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority (the Authority) is required annually to conduct a review of the effectiveness of its system of Internal Control. Internal Audit is an integral part of that system and is a significant contributor to the preparation of the Annual Governance Statement.

10.2 Members were further advised that CIPFA's Public Sector Internal Audit Standards 2017 require the Head of Internal Audit to provide the Audit Committee with assurance on the whole system of internal control, including the adequacy of risk management and corporate governance arrangements.

- 10.3 Furthermore, the report analyses the work of the Internal Audit Service for 2022/23 and contains the assurance statement based on the work of Internal Audit during the year ended March 2023.
- 10.4 Thanks were passed to the previous auditors, Conwy County Borough Council, and ACFO MacArthur for their sterling work to date.
- 10.5 **RESOLVED to:**
- i) **note the content of Head of Audit and Procurement's Annual Report and the overall 'opinion' upon the adequacy and effectiveness of the Authority's framework of governance, risk management and control.**

## **11 ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT 2022/23**

- 11.1 AM Anthony Jones presented the Annual Governance Statement 2022/23 paper which presented to Members the draft Annual Governance Statement for 2022/23.
- 11.2 **RESOLVED to:**
- i) **note the governance arrangements outlined within the draft 2022/23 Annual Governance Statement;**
  - ii) **note the forward work plan for 2023/24; and**
  - iii) **approve the draft 2022/23 Annual Government Statement.**

## **12. PROVISIONAL OUTTURN 2022/23**

- 12.1 ACFO MacArthur presented the Provisional Outturn 2022/23, which presented the unaudited revenue and capital expenditure position for 2022/23, to present the unaudited balance sheet position as at 31 March 2023 and to confirm the timetable for the production of the annual statement of accounts.
- 12.2 Members' attention was drawn to the table at the end of paragraph 13 of the paper, which highlighted expenditure across key areas within the Service.
- 12.3 Members were also asked to note the grant funding detailed in paragraph 24 and the pension liabilities in paragraph 47 of the paper.
- 12.4 **RESOLVED to:**
- i) **note the unaudited revenue and capital outturn position for the 2022/23 financial year, including the earmarked reserves, as detailed within the report;**
  - ii) **note the unaudited 2022/23 balance sheet position; and**
  - iii) **note the timescales for the production of the annual statement of accounts and the external audit thereof.**

### **13. LOCAL PENSION BOARD ANNUAL REPORT**

- 13.1 ACFO MacArthur presented to Members the Local Pension Board Annual Report. This report presented to Members of the Authority the annual report of the Local Pension Board (LPB) which details the work of the board during the 2022/23 financial year. The annual report is attached at appendix 1.
- 13.2 Approval was sought from Members to increase the membership of the Local Pension Board. These proposed changes were set out in the updated Terms of Reference attached at appendix 2.
- 13.3 The Treasurer noted that attendance on the Local Pension Board was an issue, and that increasing the membership would help to resolve this.
- 13.4 **RESOLVED to:**
- i) approve the Local Pension Board 2022/23 Annual Report;**
  - ii) note the inclusion of a further item on the forward work programme, to include an update on the financial aspects of the pension fund including the ongoing valuation;**
  - iii) approve the increase in membership of the Local Pension Board from eight to ten members; and**
  - iv) seek nominations via email for a further employer representation from Members of the Authority.**

### **14 ENVIRONMENTAL STRATEGY 2023-2030**

- 14.1 ACFO Millington presented the Environmental Strategy 2023-2030 paper, which presented a proposed Environmental Strategy for consideration by the North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority (the Authority). Authority Members from each of the constituent local authorities have been convened in a working group to develop the Environmental Strategy and specific targets set out within.
- 14.2 It was confirmed that a number of areas of action were highlighted within the sub-documents to this strategy, and that these would be rolled-out following the launch of the Environmental Strategy itself.
- 14.3 Members asked for their thanks to be passed on to Officers, and to Tim Christensen, Environment and Climate Change Manager, for his professional input in compiling this Environmental Strategy 2023-2030.
- 14.4 It was asked whether business cases for the improvement works were being looked at long-term in order to show that costs would be offset over a number of years, and responded that grants were available at the current time and were being utilised.

- 14.5 **RESOLVED to:**  
i) **approve the proposed Environmental Strategy for the period 2023-2030.**

## **15 PERFORMANCE MONITORING: APR 2022 – MAR 2023**

- 15.1 DCFO Forshaw presented the Performance Monitoring: Apr 2022 – Mar 2023, which provided information about incident activity during the 2022/23 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.
- 15.2 Members agreed that there having been no accidental dwelling fire deaths in the last year was a point to celebrate.
- 15.3 ACFO Millington confirmed that there were good arrangements in place for working with local partners in relation to wildfire prevention and response. It was further responded that sharing good practice and sharing of resources was taking place across Wales to ensure the best possible response in respect of Wildfires possible.
- 15.4 One Member asked whether there was any feasibility in mobilising fire appliances below the minimum crewing levels, and having additional crew members arrive late, in order to improve response times. ACFO Millington confirmed that new and innovative methods of improving availability were currently being looked at, and that this was one of the areas being considered.
- 15.5 Members asked for their congratulations to be passed to all employees of the North Wales Fire and Rescue Service for their hard work and dedication in ensuring the safety of the communities of North Wales.
- 15.6 **RESOLVED to:**  
i) **note the contents of this report.**

## **17 URGENT MATTERS**

- 17.1 There were no urgent matters to consider.

It was noted that the next meeting would take place on 16 October 2023.

**Meeting closed: 11:58**