

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

Minutes of the meeting of North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority held on Monday 17 June 2019 at Conwy County Borough Council Chamber, Bodlondeb, Conwy. Meeting commenced at 10.30am.

### **PRESENT**

#### **Councillor**

Peter Lewis (Chair)  
Dylan Rees (Deputy Chair)  
Bryan Apsley  
Brian Blakeley  
Ann Davies  
Ian Dunbar  
Veronica Gay  
Richard Griffiths  
J Brynmor Hughes  
Eric Wyn Jones  
Sue Lloyd-Williams  
Geoff Lowe  
Roger Parry  
Gareth A Roberts  
Rondo Roberts  
Paul Shotton  
J Rodney Skelland  
Nigel Smith  
Owen Thomas

#### **Representing**

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

### **Also present:**

S A Smith (Chief Fire Officer and Chief Executive); C P Everett (Clerk and Monitoring Officer to the Authority); K W Finch (Treasurer to the Authority); R Fairhead and Kevin Roberts (Assistant Chief Fire Officers); H MacArthur and S Morris (Assistant Chief Officers); T Williams (Corporate Communications Manager); Pam Bass and Diane Davies (Secretariat).

### **APOLOGIES**

#### **Councillor**

Marion Bateman  
Meirick Lloyd Davies  
Michael Dixon  
Gethin Glyn Williams  
David Wisinger

#### **Representing**

Flintshire County Council  
Denbighshire County Council  
Wrexham County Borough Council  
Gwynedd Council  
Flintshire County Council

## 1 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

1.1 There were no declarations of interest.

## 2 NOTICE OF URGENT MATTERS

2.1 There were no urgent matters.

## 3 MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 18 March 2019

3.1 The minutes of the FRA meeting held on 18 March 2019 were submitted for approval.

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

## 4 MATTERS ARISING

4.1 The CFO reported that the negotiations taking place through the National Joint Council for Local Authority Fire and Rescue Services regarding firefighters' pay and conditions are still ongoing. The key message is that currently no decision has been made. Members will be briefed on further developments.

4.2 Members expressed their gratitude for the work of the operational personnel during the recent flooding incidents.

## 5 IMPROVEMENT AND WELL-BEING PLAN 2020/21

5.1 ACO Morris introduced the report presenting the Executive Panel's recommendation to the Authority and seeking approval to develop a draft Environmental Strategy as part of the Authority's Improvement and Well-being Plan for 2020/21 onwards.

5.2 The report made reference to the Authority's existing long-term well-being objectives, and outlined the timetable for drafting, consulting upon and approving its 2020/21 Plan.

5.3 ACO Morris informed Members that having met on three occasions to start developing next year's Plan, the Planning Working Group's recommendation to the Executive Panel had been that the Authority's public consultation this year should focus on developing and adopting an Environmental Strategy for delivery from April 2020 onwards. This would be in accordance with the Authority's second well-being objective, and would seek to address not only the corporate responsibility and compliance aspects but also the impact of climate change and extreme weather conditions on delivering services in future.

5.4 ACO Morris reminded Members that the Authority had, in fact, already adopted Environmental and Energy Policy Statements years earlier, but that progress had been slowed to allow for the introduction of the Well-being of Future Generations Act 2015 and the establishment of Public Services Board plans. Reinvigorating this work now through the development of a new Environmental Strategy for the Authority could both address the requirements of the Well-being of Future Generations Act more obviously, and align as closely as possible to the environmental objectives of the North Wales Public Services Boards.

**5.5 RESOLVED to approve:**

- (i) the development of a draft Environmental Strategy; and**
- (ii) a period of consultation over the summer 2019 so that observations can be taken into account when developing the final Strategy for implementation from April 2020 onwards.**

**6 GOVERNANCE AND FINANCE ARRANGEMENTS FOR FRAS IN WALES**

6.1 The CFO updated Members on the latest position in respect of proposed changes to the finance and governance arrangements of fire and rescue authorities (FRAs) in Wales as set out in the White Paper "Reform of Fire and Rescue Authorities in Wales" published on 13 November 2018.

6.2 The CFO confirmed that this issue has not progressed as the Welsh Government's response to the consultation responses has not yet been published.

6.3 Members were informed that the Chief Fire Officer and Chair will be attending a meeting on 19 June 2019 with Hannah Blythyn, Deputy Minister for Housing and Local Government who is now the lead minister for fire matters.

6.4 **RESOLVED to note the information provided and receive a further update following the meeting with the Deputy Minister for Housing and Local Government.**

**7 DRAFT STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS 2018/19**

7.1 The Treasurer presented the report which provided Members with the draft 2018/19 Statement of Accounts comprising information on the draft revenue and capital expenditure outturn position for the 2018/19 financial year and a summary of the key balance sheet items including the maintenance of earmarked reserves.

- 7.2 Members were informed that the draft accounts for the year confirmed an overspend of £3,000 against an approved revenue budget of £34.1million.
- 7.3 The Treasurer also explained that against an approved capital budget of £4.9million, later revised to £5.9million, only £1.9million had actually been spent, reflecting action taken during the year to defer and reduce the capital programme.
- 7.4 The Treasurer also confirmed that the Authority maintains earmarked reserves of £0.8million (as at 31 March 2019) as a contingency.

7.5 **RESOLVED TO:**

- (i) note the draft revenue and capital outturn positions as detailed within the 2018/19 Statement of Accounts;**
- (ii) delegate approval of the final audited 2018/19 Statement of Accounts to the Executive Panel at its meeting on 29 July 2019; and**
- (iii) approve the earmarked reserves as detailed within the 2018/19 Statement of Accounts.**

8.0 ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT 2018/19

8.1 ACO MacArthur presented the report providing Members with the draft Annual Governance Statement for 2018/19 in a revised format to clearly align the governance arrangements to each of the seven core principles of the CIPFA/Solace framework.

8.2 The draft Annual Governance Statement will be subject to external review by the Wales Audit Office in accordance with the timescales for the audit of the Financial Statements.

8.3 ACO MacArthur gave details of the Governance Improvement Action Plan, which is reviewed quarterly, and Members noted the White Fleet Review which is currently underway and reported through the governance structure.

8.4 In response to a Member's question ACO MacArthur confirmed the timescales for undertaking the review of cyber security.

8.5 **RESOLVED TO:**

- (i) note the content of the Authority's draft Annual Governance Statement for 2018/19; and**
- (ii) delegate approval of the final audited Annual Governance Statement for 2018/19 to the Executive Panel at its meeting on 29 July 2019.**

## 9 PERFORMANCE MONITORING 2018/19

- 9.1 ACO Morris presented the report summarising North Wales Fire and Rescue Service's activity during 2018/19 and performance in relation to its objectives.
- 9.2 Of particular note was the sharp increase in outdoor fires during the year, which was attributed to the hot, dry summer of 2018.
- 9.3 The continuing reduction in accidental dwelling fires was also highlighted, as the number had fallen during the year to its lowest level ever recorded in North Wales.
- 9.4 The number of non-fire emergencies attended was significantly lower than in the previous year, reflecting the cessation of pilot projects which meant that numbers had reverted to similar levels as to 2015/16.
- 9.5 In response to a question regarding the Community Assistance Team the Chair agreed to raise this issue with the Deputy Minister at their next meeting on 19 June 2019.
- 9.6 **RESOLVED to note the information provided**

## 10 ANNUAL REPORT OF BAD DEBTS WRITTEN OFF 2018/19

- 10.1 The Treasurer presented the report which informed Members that the total figure for bad debts written off between 1 April 2018 and 31 March 2019 was £300.
- 10.2 **RESOLVED to note the information provided**

## 11 LOCAL PENSION BOARD ANNUAL REPORT 2018/19

- 11.1 ACO MacArthur presented the report detailing the work of the Local Pension Board during 2018/19 which had been considered and approved by the Board at its meeting on 2 May 2019.
- 11.2 During 2018/19 the Board met on three occasions and maintained a work programme which was considered at each meeting. Now that the Board has completed a number of training activities it will begin to select topics for in-depth analysis with a view to making recommendations to the Authority as and when necessary.
- 11.3 Members of the Board expressed thanks for the quality of the training received.
- 11.4 **RESOLVED to approve the Local Pension Board Annual Report 2018/19 for publication on the Authority's website.**

## 12 COMPLAINTS, PUBLIC INTEREST DISCLOSURES AND EXPRESSIONS OF APPRECIATION

- 12.1 ACFO Roberts presented the report detailing the number and types of complaints, public interest disclosures and expressions of appreciation received by the Service between 1 April 2018 and 31 March 2019, and the number of complaints resolved during that same period.
- 12.2 Members noted that 30 complaints had been received during the period (of which nine were substantiated) as well as 240 messages of appreciation.
- 12.3 For the second year in succession, no complaints had been received relating to Welsh language issues, and it was also acknowledged that expressions of appreciation in the category of partnership working and work at operational incidents had increased.
- 12.4 RESOLVED to note the report and formally note appreciation to staff for their hard work.**

## 13 MEMBERS' REMUNERATION SCHEME

- 13.1 The Clerk presented the report highlighting the changes to Members' remuneration that come into effect on the date of the annual meeting on 17 June 2019. These changes are in accordance with the determinations of the Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales (IRPW)'s Annual Report and reflect the increase in basic salary for elected members of principal councils, with consequential increases for members of fire and rescue authorities.
- 13.2 The Chair referred to a recent meeting with the IRPW and re-emphasised the importance of regular attendance by Members.

### 13.3 RESOLVED to:

- (i) note the IRPW's determinations in relation to members' allowances and remuneration, for implementation as of 17 June 2019;**
- (ii) agree that subsistence can only be claimed when members are away from home for five hours or more in line with HMRC rules;**
- (iii) give delegated authority to the Clerk to update the schedule of member remuneration within the Authority's constitution and to make any necessary amendments to the 2019/20 schedule from time to time during the municipal year, in order to reflect any changes in membership or office holders of the Authority, or as a result of any supplementary reports issued by the Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales.**

14 REVIEW OF THE AUTHORITY'S CONSTITUTION 2018/19

14.1 The Clerk introduced the report updating Members on recent revisions to the constituent elements of the Authority's Constitution and confirmed that there was nothing of concern to highlight.

**14.2 RESOLVED to:**

- (i) approve the updates to the Constitution as outlined within paragraphs 7 to 13 of the report; and**
- (ii) note the proposed actions for 2019/20 to ensure that the Constitution remains up to date.**

15 UK GOVERNMENT CONSULTATION ON RESTRICTING EXIT PAYMENTS IN THE PUBLIC SECTOR

15.1 ACO MacArthur presented the report informing Members of the UK Government's proposed regulations to limit exit payments in the public sector to a maximum of £95,000, and setting out a proposed response to the UK Government's consultation on this matter.

**15.2 RESOLVED to:**

- (i) note the information provided on the proposed regulations to implement a cap of £95,000 on exit payments in the public sector; and**
- (ii) endorse the response to the UK Government's consultation.**

16 URGENT MATTERS

16.1 There were no urgent matters.

17 PART II

17.1 There were no items moved to Part II