

NORTH WALES FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY

Minutes of the meeting of North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority held on Monday 20 March 2017 at Wrexham County Borough Council Chamber, Wrexham. Meeting commenced at 10.30am.

PRESENT

<u>Councillor</u>	<u>Representing</u>
M LI Davies (Chair)	Denbighshire County Council
P R Lewis (Deputy Chair)	Conwy County Borough Council
B Dunn	Flintshire County Council
A Evans	Wrexham County Borough Council
J G Evans	Anglesey County Council
A M Jones	Gwynedd Council
G Lowe	Wrexham County Borough Council
D MacRae	Conwy County Borough Council
P Pemberton	Wrexham County Borough Council
J R Skelland	Wrexham County Borough Council
W O Thomas	Flintshire County Council
G Williams	Gwynedd Council

Also present:

S A Smith (Chief Fire Officer and Chief Executive; C Everett (Clerk and Monitoring Officer); K Finch (Treasurer); D Docx (Deputy Chief Fire Officer); R Fairhead and G Brandrick (Assistant Chief Fire Officers); S Millington (Senior Fire Safety Manager); C Nott (Temporary Training and Development Manager); G Roberts (Temporary Senior Professional and Service Standards Manager); K Roberts (Senior Operations Manager); S Morris (Corporate Planning Manager); T Williams (Corporate Communications Manager); A Davies (Member Liaison Officer).

APOLOGIES

<u>Councillor</u>	<u>Representing</u>
B Cowie	Denbighshire County Council
L W Davies	Anglesey County Council
A I Dunbar	Flintshire County Council
M Holland	Denbighshire County Council
C Hughes	Gwynedd Council
R O Jones	Anglesey County Council
H McGuill	Flintshire County Council
W T Owen	Gwynedd Council
W R Owen	Gwynedd Council
R E Parry	Conwy County Borough Council
P Prendergast	Denbighshire County Council
W P Shotton	Flintshire County Council
A Tansley	Conwy County Borough Council
D Taylor	Wrexham County Borough Council
J Vaughan	Conwy County Borough Council

- 1 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST
 - 1.1 There were no declarations of interest.
- 2 MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 19 DECEMBER 2016
 - 2.1 The minutes of the Fire and Rescue Authority meeting held on 19 December 2016 were submitted for approval.
 - 2.2 **RESOLVED to approve minutes of the meeting as a true and correct record.**
- 3 MATTERS ARISING
 - 3.1 6.9 (v) – the CFO confirmed that no savings had transpired before 15 February therefore there had been no scope to alter the budget level downwards.
- 4 URGENT MATTERS
 - 4.1 There were no urgent matters.
- 5 CHAIR'S REPORT
 - 5.1 The report listed meetings and events attended by Cllr M LI Davies and Cllr P R Lewis in their roles of Chair and Deputy Chair of North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority between January and March 2017.
 - 5.2 **RESOLVED to note the information provided.**
- 6 THE WHITE PAPER REFORMING LOCAL GOVERNMENT: RESILIENT AND RENEWED
 - 6.1 The CFO presented the report which invited members to consider the Welsh Government White Paper *Reforming Local Government: Resilient and Renewed*.
 - 6.2 Members expressed concern at the lack of detail in the report and felt that the Authority's response should refer to the fact that in terms of scrutiny the Chair and Chief Fire Officer meet with councillors across North Wales as part of the improvement and wellbeing objectives' consultation process. The CFO advised members to note the principles in the report and await the publication of a more detailed report later in the year.
 - 6.3 **RESOLVED to note the report and delegate the approval of the response to the consultation to the Chair and Deputy Chair.**
- 7 DRAFT IMPROVEMENT AND WELLBEING PLAN 2017-18
 - 7.1 The DCFO presented the draft Improvement and Wellbeing Plan 2017-18 for approval.

7.2 The DCFO reminded members of the two stages of Plan development that had been followed:

- stage one: the draft consultation document had been approved for consultation at the full Authority meeting on 19 September 2016;
- stage two: at the Executive Panel meeting on 13 February 2017 members had considered the responses received to the consultation and approved the production of a final draft Improvement and Wellbeing Plan 2017-18, based on four objectives, for approval by the full Authority at this meeting.

7.3 Members also noted that following discussion at the Improvement Planning Working Group at its meeting of 6 March 2017 the wording of the fourth objective had been adjusted to reflect the desire to be collaborative and integrated in diversifying the services provided. The objectives/steps in the plan for 2017-18 were as follows:

- (i) Deliver a comprehensive programme of prevention activity aimed at helping to keep people and communities safe from accidental fires in living accommodation;
- (ii) Secure the Authority's financial sustainability by adopting a 3-year financial strategy that combines the use of reserves, increasing financial contributions and making service reductions;
- (iii) Re-balance the Authority's resources to match risk by implementing a model of resourcing that ensures the availability of at least 20 strategically located fire crews in North Wales at times of relatively lower risk, and at least 38 at times of relatively higher risk;
- (iv) Seek opportunities to work with other organisations to offer a wider range of integrated services to the public of North Wales.

7.4 Members were given the opportunity to discuss the plan and objectives.

7.5 Cllr Pemberton was concerned about objectives 2 and 3, and the potential for the second fire appliance to be removed from Wrexham fire station as part of future service reductions which had been given consideration as options to balance a three year financial plan, if the Plan was approved. Other members expressed concerns over the loss of fire cover in the Wrexham area if the second appliance was removed. Cllr Lewis explained that there was no mention of Wrexham fire station and its second appliance in the report and that the recommendation was to approve the high-level plan for 2017-18 and the four objectives.

7.6 The Clerk advised members that the withdrawal of this appliance, or indeed any other potential service change which might have to be considered in the future, was not referenced in the report and was not therefore a decision for this meeting. Approval of the Plan should not be read as an implied intention to make any specific service changes beyond those already approved in the course of budget setting for 2017/18. The Authority had a duty to adopt the Plan and adoption in itself would not give way to any new service changes. Any options for changes to services in future years would have to come before the full Authority for consideration over the course of time. He explained that objective 2 referred to the only three strategic options

available to the Authority to balance its future budgets - as would be the case with any local authority. The financial future was uncertain and the new Authority would have to size its plans for service retention to the budget it could secure year on year.

- 7.7 The Treasurer provided reassurance that similar wording for an objective had been used in previous years and it had not prevented the Authority from deciding to vary the objective once approved. The Treasurer also reminded members that the new Authority, post-election, would have to review the plan and how best to implement the objectives over time.
- 7.8 The CFO supported the Clerk and Treasurer's comments. He reminded members that the value of deferring any further service reductions until as late as possible had been discussed at length at previous Authority meetings. A main concern of members had been to avoid compulsory redundancies thereby requiring forward planning on other options. The CFO listed other budget pressures facing the Authority such as the new ESMCP and the pension revaluation. Also, the Authority will have to deal with wider local government and constitutional issues as well as any changes that may result from the White Paper discussed earlier in the meeting. Members were also reminded that other options to make budget savings to meet the anticipated shortfall of £900k by 2019-20 had been discussed by the Improvement Plan Working Group and reported. Therefore, members had been aware of the options for some time.
- 7.9 Cllr Pemberton asked that an amendment be made 'that all talk about Wrexham is removed from objective 3' and he also requested a recorded vote. The Clerk advised that this was not a valid amendment as the issue of the Wrexham second appliance was not referred to in any of the objectives.
- 7.10 On the advice of the Clerk, Cllr Pemberton then put forward an alternative amendment as follows 'the option to withdraw second pump from Wrexham is withdrawn'. The Clerk advised that as this option has been under consideration by the Authority, and that as the objective two did refer to the possibility of service reductions, that this was a valid amendment to clarify the position and the intentions of this Authority. He advised that if passed this amendment would not fetter the new Authority from considering this or any other service reduction or service change option in the future. The new Authority would have an obligation to have a balanced financial plan and could not be fettered.
- 7.11 The valid amendment was carried by a vote of 8 to 4. A recorded vote was taken at the request of the requisite number of members.
- 7.12 Cllr Lewis congratulated the author of the improvement and wellbeing plan for an easy to read and concise document and it was agreed to place on record thanks to the Corporate Planning Manager.
- 7.13 **Having accepted the amendment as noted above, it was RESOLVED, UNANIMOUSLY, to approve the final draft of the Improvement and Well-being Plan 2017-18 and Statement for publication on the Authority's website before the end of March 2017.**

8 IMPROVEMENT AND WELLBEING OBJECTIVES 2018-19

8.1 The DCFO presented the report which proposed draft improvement and wellbeing objectives 2018/19 and requested that members approve the objectives for consultation. The Clerk clarified that the financial sustainability issue will be at the discretion of the new Authority.

8.2 **RESOLVED to approve the draft improvement and well-being objectives 2018/19 for consultation as follows:**

- i. To deliver a comprehensive programme of prevention activity aimed at helping to keep people and communities safe from accidental fires in living accommodation;
- ii. To secure the Authority's financial sustainability by maintaining the 3-year financial strategy that can combine the use of reserves, increasing financial contributions and making service reductions;
- iii. To seek opportunities to work with other organisations to offer a wider range of integrated services to the public of North Wales.

9 EMERGENCY MEDICAL RESPONSE

9.1 ACFO Fairhead presented the report which advised Members of developing issues in respect of the National Joint Council for Local Authorities Fire Brigades (NJC) workstreams in support of more diverse activities for firefighters. A key workstream is the provision of emergency medical response (EMR) or co-responding with the ambulance service to certain categories of medical emergency.

9.2 Members had been kept informed throughout the co-responding trial which had commenced in April 2015 and ran until 28 February 2017. It was noted that the NJC had commissioned researchers to evaluate the co-responding work using data from those involved in the trials and from other fire authorities undertaking this type of work; a copy of the report had been made available to members and its findings were being analysed by the NJC.

9.3 Members were given the opportunity to ask questions and have issues clarified; it was confirmed that firefighters respond to calls in pairs using a car. However, this varies nationally and may change once a final decision has been made by the NJC.

9.4 **RESOLVED to**

- (i) note the developing national situation;**
- (ii) recognise that local arrangements continue on an interim basis but may be affected by the outcome of the FBU recall conference on 21 March 2017.**

10 PROVISIONAL OUTTURN 2016-17

10.1 The Treasurer presented the report which informed Members about the estimated provisional outturn for the financial year 2016-17. Current indications are that there will be no underspend and £454,327 of reserves will be needed to support the budget for 2016/17. The Treasurer confirmed that reserves are being used to subsidise the Authority's budget, however, less reserves than anticipated had been used therefore the remainder will be used for future financial planning.

10.2 **RESOLVED to note the financial position of the Authority.**

11 PRUDENTIAL INDICATORS, TREASURY MANAGEMENT STRATEGY, INVESTMENT STRATEGY AND MINIMUM REVENUE PROVISION POLICY

11.1 Members were presented with the Prudential Indicators, Treasury Management Strategy, Investment Strategy and Minimum Revenue Provision Policy for 2017/18. The Treasurer explained that the Audit Committee has delegated power to review these documents in finer detail and this had been done at its meeting on 30 January 2017.

11.2 Members were advised that an internal audit of the treasury management function had identified a risk for Conwy County Borough Council (CBC) in that the professional negligence policy did not cover losses when dealing with third party funds, such as North Wales Fire and Rescue Service. In order to address this issue, it was noted that Conwy CBC is proposing to amend the Service Level Agreement (SLA) that is in place with the Fire and Rescue Authority to include a proviso that 'Conwy CBC will show due diligence when managing North Wales Fire and Rescue Service funds and any losses incurred due to bank failures/fraud/corruption etc. will be the responsibility of the Fire and Rescue Authority unless it can be proved that Conwy CBC was negligent in the management of those funds'. It was also noted that the risk to the Fire and Rescue Authority of agreeing to the amendment is low as Conwy CBC has an excellent track record and always manage those funds within the strategy approved by Members at the beginning of the financial year.

11.3 **RESOLVED to approve each of the four key elements of the report and the recommendations contained therein and also the amendment to the SLA:**

- (i) **a list of prudential indicators as required by the CIPFA Prudential Code for Capital Finance in Local Authorities;**
- (ii) **the Treasury Management Strategy outlining the strategy to be followed regarding short and long-term borrowing for 2016/17 in accordance with the CIPFA code of Practice on Treasury Management;**
- (iii) **the strategy to be followed regarding the investment of Fire and Rescue Authority funds;**
- (iv) **Minimum Revenue Provision Statement;**
- (v) **amendment to the Service Level Agreement with Conwy County Borough Council as explained in paragraph 11.2.**

12 THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE'S ANNUAL REPORT TO THE FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY

12.1 The Clerk presented the annual report of the Standards Committee to members.

12.2 It was noted that independent members, Celia Blomeley and Jane Eyton-Jones, were coming to the end of their second terms on the Authority and members wished to place on record their thanks to these two ladies for their excellent contributions over the last eight years. Recruitment of two new independent members will take place later in the year.

12.3 **RESOLVED to note the Standards Committee's annual report.**

13 PAY POLICY STATEMENT

13.1 The report sought members' approval for the pay policy statement for 2017/18. It was noted that the statement had been amended for 2017/18 in order to comply with the revised guidance notes for 'Transparency of Senior Pay in the Devolved Welsh Public Sector' compiled by the Public Services Staff Commission.

13.2 **RESOLVED to approve the pay policy statement for the coming financial year 2017/18.**

14 TEMPORARY DELEGATION OF POWERS

14.1 The Clerk presented the report which asked members to delegate powers from the end of office of the present members of the Fire and Rescue Authority to the first meeting of the Authority after the elections.

14.2 **RESOLVED to**

(i) **approve that all the powers of the Fire and Rescue Authority, its committees and its office holders be delegated to the Chief Fire Officer, in consultation with the Clerk and Treasurer, for the period from 9 May 2017 until the first meeting of the Fire and Rescue Authority on 19 June 2017.**

(ii) **note that 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.**

15 POST ELECTION ARRANGEMENTS AND INDUCTION (VERBAL)

15.1 The Clerk informed members that a training/induction day will be held for new and returning members on 13 June 2017.

15.2 **RESOLVED to note the information provided.**

16 MINUTES - FOR INFORMATION

16.1 The minutes of the following meetings were submitted for information:

- Audit Committee meeting held on 30 January 2017
- Executive Panel meeting held on 13 February 2017
- Standards Committee meeting held on 1 March 2017.

16.2 **RESOLVED to note the minutes for information.**