

NORTH WALES FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY

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

PRESENT

Councillor

P Lewis (Deputy Chair)
B Blakeley
M Bateman
A Davies
M Dixon
V Gay
J B Hughes
E W Jones
S Lloyd-Williams
D Rees
O Thomas

Representing

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

Also present:

S A Smith (Chief Fire Officer and Chief Executive); G Owens (Deputy Clerk and Monitoring Officer to the Authority); K W Finch (Treasurer to the Authority); R Fairhead and K Roberts (Assistant Chief Fire Officers); S Morris and H MacArthur (Assistant Chief Officers); Ll Gutierrez-Jones (HR Manager); T Williams (Corporate Communications Manager); S Forrest (Accountant, Treasurer's Department, Conwy County Borough Council); A Davies (Member Liaison Officer).

APOLOGIES

Councillor

M Ll Davies (Chair)
B Apsley
A Daniels
I Dunbar
P Evans
R Griffiths
I D Lloyd
G Lowe
R Parry
R Roberts
P Shotton
N Smith
A Tansley
G Williams
D Wisinger
C Everett

Representing

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

1 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

1.1 There were no declarations of interest.

2 MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 18 JUNE 2018

2.1 The minutes of the Fire and Rescue Authority meeting held on 18 June were submitted for approval.

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

3 MATTERS ARISING

3.1 Community Assistance Team (CAT) – although not directly related to the CAT, the CFO informed members that a question had been asked at the Senedd about the future of co-responding and a written response had been provided; a copy of which was made available to members at the meeting.

3.2 Improvement and Wellbeing Plan 2019/20 – the consultation document had been published and the Chief Fire Officer and Assistant Chief Officers had attended council meetings at Denbighshire and Flintshire, with arrangements in place to visit all councils in North Wales by the end of October.

3.3 **RESOLVED to note the update.**

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 June and September 2018.

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

6 DRAFT ASSESSMENT OF THE AUTHORITY'S PERFORMANCE 2017/18

6.1 ACO Morris presented the report which asked members to approve the draft assessment of NWFRA's performance during 2017/18 in relation to its improvement and well-being objectives, equality objectives and compliance with the relevant Welsh language standards.

6.2 Members were reminded that the Authority is required to give a public account of its performance, progress and compliance with various legislation during the previous financial year. The annual assessment document combined all the necessary elements in order to meet the requirements of the following legislation: Well-being of Future Generations Act 2015, the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2009, the Wales Equality Act 2010 (Statutory Duties) (Wales) Regulations 2011 and the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011.

6.3 Members commended officers for incorporating all the information into one comprehensive document and it was **RESOLVED to**

(i) approve the draft assessment of the Authority's performance during 2017/18 (subject to minor additions and corrections if required) for publication on the Authority's website by 30 September 2018; and

(ii) note the Service's intention to publish a leaflet for general distribution that summarises the key elements of the assessment before the end of December 2018.

7 STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS 2017/18

7.1 The Treasurer presented the audited statement of accounts for 2017/18 including the governance statement for members' approval; it was noted that both documents had been subject to audit by the Wales Audit Office (WAO). The findings of the Auditor General for Wales were also presented as part of the report.

7.2 It was noted that all information had been considered in detail by the Audit Committee at its meeting on 10 September; members present had no concerns or further comments and recommended that the Authority approve the accounts. In compliance with the Accounts and Audit (Wales) (Amendment) Regulations 2010, it is a requirement that the audited accounts are approved by Members by 30 September.

7.3 ACO MacArthur confirmed that following the audit of accounts, management had agreed to correct all but two of the mis-statements identified, however, she confirmed that these will be adjusted in the 2019/20 statement of accounts with a full explanation provided.

7.4 Amanda Hughes from the WAO gave an overview of the audit of financial statements document including the representations contained within the Letter of Representation. It was noted that the draft accounts and governance statement were submitted for audit on 1 June 2018. These confirmed the draft outturn position of net expenditure of £33.329m, resulting in a contribution from reserves of £93,083. The final audited position remains unchanged.

- 7.5 Ms Hughes referred to the fact that an issue with pensions payments had been identified during the audits of the accounts of all fire and rescue authorities in Wales and legal advice was currently being sought on this complex issue. ACO MacArthur assured members that the three FRAs in Wales are also seeking legal advice on the pensions matter and an update will be provided once the matter has been resolved.
- 7.6 Ms Hughes confirmed that the WAO will be issuing an unqualified audit report on the financial statements, however, a certificate will only be issued once the pensions issue has been resolved.
- 7.7 **RESOLVED:**
- (i) to approve the statement of accounts and annual governance statement for 2017/18;**
 - (ii) to note the audit of financial statements report as produced by the Auditor General for Wales;**
 - (iii) to approve the Letter of Representation**

At this juncture, members were informed that Sandra Forrest will no longer be working for the Authority due to a reallocation of duties within Conwy CBC. The Treasurer wished to place on record his personal thanks to Ms Forrest for her involvement and commitment in assisting him with the Authority's work since 1998.

8 PROVISIONAL OUTTURN 2018/19

- 8.1 The Treasurer presented the report which provided an estimate of NWFRAs' provisional outturn for the financial year 2018/19.
- 8.2 Members were reminded that the Authority had approved a revenue budget of £34.1m at its meeting of 18 December 2017. This included a contribution from reserves of £646,700. As at 31 August 2018 the current forecast is that the full budget allocation will be required including the contribution from reserves. It was noted that spending within budget will require ongoing management of a number of cost pressures including those arising from recent increased activity.
- 8.3 In terms of the capital budget, the Authority had approved a capital budget of £4.9m in December 2017 which increased to £5.9m to accommodate projects outstanding from 2017/18. The full year capital expenditure forecast is £3.4m, reflecting the re-profiling of the timing of delivery of a number of projects.

8.4 ACO MacArthur explained the cost pressures relating to ICT which included significant operational cost with mobilising crews and IT equipment on appliances and the fire ground. There are also financial and cyber security risks which will be considered in detail during the budget planning discussions for 2019/20.

8.5 **RESOLVED to:**

(i) note that the Authority is currently forecasting to fully utilise its revenue budget of £34.1m in 2018/19; and

(ii) note that the Authority is forecasting capital expenditure of £3.4m during 2018/19 against the plan of £5.9m.

9 INCLUSIVE FIRE SERVICE GROUP

9.1 Councillor Sue Lloyd-Williams presented the report on the work of the Inclusive Fire Service Group. Cllr Lloyd-Williams was nominated to be the lead member on this work at a meeting of the Executive Panel in July 2017.

9.2 The report detailed progress towards delivering the improvement strategies recommended by the Inclusive Fire Service Group (IFSG) of the National Joint Council for Local Authority Fire and Rescue Services (NJC).

9.3 Cllr Lloyd-Williams reported the excellent work that has already been done within the Service including training for some staff to become Mind Blue Light Champions to support individuals with mental health issues. The Councillor thanked staff for their work in progressing with all the strategies which will benefit the health and wellbeing of all NWFRS staff.

9.4 **RESOLVED to note the content of the report.**

10 FINANCE AND GOVERNANCE ARRANGEMENTS FOR FRAs IN WALES

10.1 The CFO presented the report which updated members about the developments in the Cabinet Secretary's proposals to change the finance and governance arrangements for Welsh fire and rescue authorities.

10.2 Members were asked in particular to note the most recent correspondence received from the Cabinet Secretary in which he had offered to hold further discussions between his officials and officers of the three FRAs. Members were given the opportunity to express their views about this offer and to consider what issues they would wish to see discussed with Welsh Government officials.

10.3 Members thanked officers for their work to date on this matter and agreed that officers should continue with the good work.

10.4 **RESOLVED to note the contents of the report and that the Cabinet's Secretary offer of a meeting between his officials and FRA officers be accepted.**

11 TREASURY MANAGEMENT AND PRUDENTIAL INDICATORS

11.1 The Treasurer presented the report which provided the latest information on the Authority's treasury management and prudential indicators. It was noted that members of the Audit Committee, at its meeting on 10 September 2018, had reviewed the contents in detail and had no major observations nor could find any major risks in the report and recommended that it be approved by the Authority.

11.2 **RESOLVED to approve the amended prudential indicators as noted in the report.**

12 CHIEF OFFICERS' PAY AWARD 2018

12.1 Members were asked to endorse the agreements in respect of the pay award for Chief Officers for 2018. These agreements have been reached by the National Joint Council for Brigade Managers of Local Authority Fire and Rescue Services (NJC) in respect of the Chief Fire Officer and Assistant Chief Fire Officers and the Joint Negotiating Committee for Chief Officers of Local Authorities (JNC) for the Assistant Chief Officers and the Treasurer.

12.2 The negotiating bodies have reached the following agreements for 2018:

- the NJC has agreed a two-stage approach which includes a 1% increase from 1 January 2018 rising to 2% from 1 July 2018. This agreement applies to the Chief Fire Officer and the Assistant Chief Fire Officers.
- the JNC has agreed a 2% award from 1 April 2018. This agreement applies to the Assistant Chief Officers and the Treasurer.

12.3 **RESOLVED to endorse the decisions as noted above.**

- 13 FIREFIGHTERS PENSION SCHEMES LOCAL PENSION BOARD – ANNUAL REPORT 2017-18
- 13.1 ACO MacArthur presented the annual report of the Local Pension Board which details the work of the board during 2017/18.
- 13.2 RESOLVED to approve the Local Pension Board annual report 2017/18 for publication on the Authority's website.**
- 14 STANDARDS COMMITTEE VACANCY
- 14.1 The Deputy Clerk informed members that the term of office of one member of the Standards Committee had finished on 31 August 2018; therefore the Authority will need to recruit a new independent member. Gwynedd Council has a vacancy on its Standards Committee and in the spirit of collaboration and saving money on the recruitment process it has been agreed that NWFRA and Gwynedd Council will share the cost of advertising the post in two newspapers, but will have separate selection and interview processes.
- 14.2 It was noted that a letter had been sent to David Morris, whose term of office had ended, to thank him for his work over the last eight years.
- 14.3 RESOLVED to note the information provided.**