

NORTH WALES FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY

Minutes of the extraordinary meeting of North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority held on Monday 25 October 2021 virtually via Zoom. Meeting commenced at 9.30am.

Councillor	Representing
P R Lewis (Chair)	Conwy County Borough Council
D Rees	Anglesey County Council
R Griffiths	Anglesey County Council
R E Parry	Conwy County Borough Council
N Smith	Conwy County Borough Council
M Ll Davies	Denbighshire County Council
M Bateman	Flintshire County Council
A I Dunbar	Flintshire County Council
V Gay	Flintshire County Council
P Shotton	Flintshire County Council
W O Thomas	Flintshire County Council
D Wisinger	Flintshire County Council
J W Parry	Gwynedd Council
G Williams	Gwynedd Council
B Apsley	Wrexham County Borough Council
M Dixon	Wrexham County Borough Council
G Lowe	Wrexham County Borough Council

Also present:

D Docx (Chief Fire Officer and Chief Executive); K Finch (Treasurer);
G Owens (Clerk and Monitoring Officer); A Davies (Member Liaison Officer).

The Chair opened the meeting and welcomed Members to the extraordinary meeting. The meeting had been arranged in order to deal with one confidential report and Members therefore formally approved that the meeting be held under part II conditions.

In addition to the report, Members had also been provided with diagrams of the current structure and proposed structure as well as the Local Government Association's report "NJC for Brigade Managers Salaries and Numbers Survey 2019".

1 APOLOGIES

Councillor	Representing
A Tansley	Conwy County Borough Council
B Blakeley	Denbighshire County Council
A Davies	Denbighshire County Council
J B Hughes	Gwynedd Council
G A Roberts	Gwynedd Council
A Roberts	Wrexham County Borough Council

2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

2.1 None.

3 URGENT MATTERS

3.1 None.

4 PRINCIPAL MANAGEMENT TEAM RESILIENCE AND PAY REVIEW

4.1 It was noted that the report had been written in two parts. The first part relating to structure and capacity had been prepared by the Chief Fire Officer, and the second part relating to pay and remuneration had been prepared by the Clerk and the Treasurer.

4.2 Members noted that the report had been considered by the Executive Panel at its meeting on 18 October 2021; its Members were supportive of the proposed actions and unanimously recommended that it be approved by the Fire and Rescue Authority.

4.3 The Chief Fire Officer led Members through the first part of the report which presented the Chief Fire Officer's proposal for the composition of the Service's Principal Management Team. The proposed Principal Management Team structure was intended to provide additional operational and management resilience as well as capacity to address the challenges highlighted by the Chief Fire Officer in her situational assessment.

4.4 It was noted that the temporary Principal Management Team structure had been in place for almost four years, with the post of Deputy Chief Fire Officer left vacant during that period. The CFO's proposal included formalising the role of the Assistant Chief Officer as part of the establishment and advertising the posts of Deputy and Assistant Chief Fire Officer with the full Authority confirming the appointments before the end of December 2021.

4.5 The report detailed the rationale behind the proposed structure and Members then discussed the information provided and were able to ask questions of the CFO, Clerk and Treasurer. Members were reassured of the affordability of the proposed structure and that it was necessary to reinstate the post of Deputy Chief Fire Officer.

4.6 Having concluded discussions around the proposed structure, the Chief Fire Officer withdrew from the meeting and the Clerk led Members through the remainder of the report relating to principal officers' salaries.

4.7 The Clerk explained that he and his predecessor, Colin Everett, had drawn up a set of principles for adoption. The principles would enable the Authority's current and future senior pay reviews to be based on comparable salary rates paid by fire and rescue authorities operating in areas with similar sized populations, namely Population Band 2 areas. By utilising the NJC benchmarking data the Authority was relying on data that was sector specific, related to directly comparable ranks and which was comprehensive being based on all the salaries at every fire and rescue service in England and Wales. The principles would thus remove any element of subjectivity and would help to ensure that North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority remains competitive when seeking to attract and retain senior leaders from within the Service or elsewhere.

4.8 The proposed principles were that:

- i. pay scales will be linked to the average basic pay rates collated and published by the National Joint Council for Brigade Managers of Local Authority Fire and Rescue Services in order to give appropriate sector-specific comparisons;
- ii. each seniority level will be employed on a three point scale with progression up the scale to be subject to satisfactory annual appraisal. Each increment in scale will be based upon £1,500 for the CFO; and a relative proportion for the other posts;
- iii. the Authority will pay, at the bottom of the three point scale, the average basic pay for an authority in Population Band 2, which will be inclusive of all duties;
- iv. the nationally negotiated and agreed annual pay awards will be automatically applied, as currently happens in the case of "grey book" and "green book" employees (subject to an employee choosing to forego any part of it);
- v. the pay relativities between the roles of CFO, DCFO, ACFO and ACO will be restored to the proportions within North Wales Fire and Rescue Service prior to 2009, and which are still custom and practice in most Fire and Rescue Services. The salary of each seniority level will be calculated as a proportion of the Chief Fire Officer's salary as follows :

	Current	Proposed
Chief Fire Officer	100%	100%
Deputy Chief Fire Officer	77.7%	80%
Assistant Chief Fire Officer	72.2%	75%
Assistant Chief Officer	48.7%	60%

- vi. posts will be sized appropriately, relative to their seniority level, and will be of equal size across all at that level in order to ensure that officers receive equal pay for work of equal value; and
- vii. pay will be reviewed at regular intervals in line with the requirements under the 'two-track' approach for determining levels of pay for Brigade Managers as prescribed by the National Joint Council. Three years is the accepted interval.

4.9 Members discussed the second part of the report at length and questioned in particular the increase in the Assistant Chief Officer's salary. The suggested percentage rate for the post was directly comparable to the same rank at South Wales Fire and Rescue Service and was slightly lower than the equivalent post in Mid and West Wales Fire and Rescue Service. The disparity between the current and proposed salary demonstrated how far adrift the salaries had become in relation to the UK average which was due the fact that a senior salary review had not been undertaken in NWFRS since 2015.

- 4.10 The Chair thanked all Members for their contributions to the discussion and it was **RESOLVED to**
- a) **note the Chief Fire Officer's recommendation as to the future composition of the Service's Principal Management Team;**
 - b) **adopt the seven pay principles as set out in the report;**
 - c) **apply the revised salaries, as set out in the report, from 1 November 2021.**