

## North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority Executive Panel

Minutes of the Executive Panel meeting of North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority held on Monday 26 July 2021 via Zoom. Meeting commenced at 2.00pm.

### Present

Councillors:

P Lewis (Chair)	Conwy County Borough Council
D Rees (Deputy Chair)	Anglesey County Council
A Davies	Denbighshire County Council
M Ll Davies	Denbighshire County Council
M Dixon	Wrexham County Borough Council
R Griffiths	Anglesey County Council
J B Hughes	Gwynedd Council

### Also Present

D Docx (Chief Fire Officer and Chief Executive); K Finch (Treasurer); R Fairhead, H MacArthur and S Millington (Assistant Chief Fire Officers); S Morris (Assistant Chief Officer); T Williams (Corporate Communications Manager); A Davies (Members' Liaison Officer).

### 1 APOLOGIES

Cllr M Bateman	Flintshire County Council
Cllr R Parry	Conwy County Borough Council
Cllr A Tansley	Conwy County Borough Council
Cllr R Roberts	Wrexham County Borough Council
C Everett	Clerk to the Authority

### 2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

2.1 There were no declarations of interest.

### 3 NOTICE OF URGENT MATTERS

3.1 None.

### 4 MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 10 MAY 2021

4.1 The minutes of the Executive Panel meeting held on 10 May 2021 were submitted for approval.

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

## 5 MATTERS ARISING

5.1 ESMCP – at the last meeting, Members had been informed of the delay with the UK-wide project, that the existing contract with Airwave had been extended until 2026 and that it was anticipated that the Welsh Government would continue to fund it until 2026. The Chief Fire Officer informed Members that the issue of funding and the likely increase in cost due to the system becoming out-dated had been raised at the FRA Consultative Forum on 21 July. The Deputy Minister had agreed to give consideration to increasing the grant and her response will be reported to Members at the next meeting.

5.2 **RESOLVED to note the update.**

## 6 COVID-19 UPDATE

6.1 The Chair asked ACFO Fairhead, prior to the COVID-19 update, to give an overview of incidents activity over the weekend.

6.2 It was noted that all emergency services are seeing an increase in activity due to 'staycations' and the warm weather. Amongst the incidents attended were two accidental dwelling fires involving elderly people who lived alone and were classed as vulnerable adults. There were no serious injuries and the fires were extinguished quickly. However, this again highlights the importance of partnership working and continuing the endeavours to work with agencies who are in contact with vulnerable people on a daily basis to keep people safe in their homes. Safe and well checks will be undertaken with both of these individuals today to provide further interventions and advice in order to prevent a reoccurrence. The ACFO referred to the wholetime and on-call firefighters who have all worked hard in extreme weather and also the professionalism of Control staff who throughout the busy weekend were constantly monitoring the availability of appliances across North Wales and ensuring that there were enough appliances in the right place in order to continue to keep safe the people who live and work in North Wales as well as those visiting the area.

6.3 ACFO Fairhead provided an update on the latest impact of COVID-19 on the Service. Although there had been an increase in cases and that more people were having to self-isolate due to the Test and Trace system, the Service continues with its strategic intent to keep the workforce and the community safe. The Covid safety measures that are currently in place will continue for as long as necessary in order to ensure fire and rescue services can continue to be delivered to the people of North Wales.

6.4 Members expressed their gratitude to all staff and crews who had worked tirelessly over the weekend. In terms of partnership working and identifying vulnerable people in the communities of North Wales, the Chair asked that all Members contact their Cabinet Member for Social Care to cascade the information about safe and well checks to all social care staff in their constituent authorities.

6.5 **RESOLVED to note the update provided.**

7 STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS AND ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT 2020/21

7.1 Matthew Edwards from Audit Wales gave a verbal update about the latest position with approving the statement of accounts for 2020/21. He stated that Audit Wales officers were still in discussion with NWFRS management about a number of issues and therefore were not yet able to provide an audit opinion. It was noted that the Accounts and Audit (Coronavirus) (Amendment) Regulations 2020 No. 404 has extended the publication date of the Accounts to 30 November. Mr Edwards confirmed that Audit Wales' proposed opinion will be available for the next Audit Committee and ready for final approval at the next Executive Panel meeting on 18 October.

7.2 **RESOLVED to note the information.**

8 PERFORMANCE MONITORING APRIL 2021 – JUNE 2021

8.1 ACO Morris presented the report which provided information relating to the Service's incident activity during the first quarter of the 2021/22 financial year, performance in relation to improvement and well-being objectives and other notable incident activity.

8.2 The following statistics were highlighted to Members:

- the Service had attended a combined total of 1,320 emergency incidents and false alarms, down 4.2% from 1,378 in the same period last year;
- the number of outdoor fires reduced from 399 to 294 compared with the same period last year;
- false alarms attended reduced by 5.9% from 629 in the first quarter of 2020/21 to 592 in this reporting period;

8.3 It was noted that the number of accidental dwelling fires increased by 9 (8.7%), although this was not a large increase it was nevertheless an increase and the Service will be looking to engage with the public to ensure it does not continue to increase over time.

8.4 In terms of the Service's prevention work, with some lifting of the pandemic restrictions, the Service completed 2,547 safe and well checks (SAWC) during the first quarter; this is fewer than for the same period last year. It was also noted that the number of face-to-face SAWCs undertaken were limited by pandemic restrictions on social contact resulting in the majority of SAWCs being conducted over the telephone.

8.5 In response to a request, ACO Morris agreed to provide further detail at a future meeting as regards the causes of accidental dwelling fires

8.6 **RESOLVED to note the contents of the performance monitoring report.**

9 APPOINTMENT TO POSTS OF MONITORING OFFICER AND TREASURER

9.1 The CFO presented the report which advised Members about the requirements of the statutory posts of Monitoring Officer and Treasurer and to seek approval to enter into a competitive process for the appointment thereof with effect from 1 April 2022.

9.2 The CFO explained that Colin Everett has indicated his intention to resign as the Monitoring Officer of the Authority at the same time as he resigns as Chief Executive of Flintshire County Council. The current contract includes provision for a deputy Monitoring Officer and these services are provided by Gareth Owens, Monitoring Officer of Flintshire County Council. The intention is to request that Gareth Owens continues to undertake the responsibilities of the Monitoring Officer until 1 April 2022.

9.3 Ken Finch, having served as the Treasurer of the Authority since its inception in 1996, has also announced his intention to step down from the role towards the end of this year.

9.4 As both roles, Monitoring Officer and Treasurer, are statutory posts which must be held by named individuals with the relevant knowledge, skills and experience, Members agreed that a competitive appointment process should be undertaken. Under the terms of the Authority's constitution, it was noted that the appointment process should be overseen by a committee established for that purpose. The appointments will be subject to approval by the full Authority following the recommendation of that committee.

9.5 The Chair proposed that the appointments panel comprises:

- Cllr Peter Lewis, Chair of the Authority
- Cllr Dylan Rees, Deputy Chair of the Authority
- Cllr Bryan Apsley, Chair of the Audit Committee
- Cllr Owen Thomas, Deputy Chair of the Audit Committee

and two Members from the constituent authorities not already represented, namely Denbighshire and Gwynedd – names to be confirmed.

9.6 **RESOLVED to**

- (i) note the requirement for the Authority to appoint to the statutory roles of Treasurer and Monitoring Officer and approve the commencement of a competitive process for the appointments thereof with effect from 1 April 2022;**
- (ii) agree the appointments panel as set out above.**