

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

Minutes of the meeting of **North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority** held on **Monday 18 December 2023** virtually via **Zoom**. Meeting commenced at **13.00hrs**.

### **Councillor**

Dylan Rees (Chair)  
Paul Cunningham (Deputy Chair)  
Bryan Apsley  
Marion Bateman  
Carol Beard  
Tina Claydon  
Adele Davies-Cooke  
Sharon Doleman  
Jeff Evans  
Chrissy Gee  
Alan Hughes  
John Brynmor Hughes  
Gareth R Jones  
John Ifan Jones  
Marc Jones  
Gwynfor Owen  
Beverley Parry-Jones  
Arwyn Herald Roberts  
Austin Roberts  
Gareth A Roberts  
Rondo Roberts  
Paul Rogers  
Gareth Sandilands  
Dale Selvester  
Rob Triggs  
Michelle Walker  
Mark Young

### **Representing**

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

### **Also present:**

Dawn Docx	Chief Fire Officer (CFO)
Stewart Forshaw	Deputy Chief Fire Officer (DCFO)
Helen MacArthur	Assistant Chief Fire Officer (ACFO)
Stuart Millington	Assistant Chief Fire Officer (ACFO)
Dan Stephens	Chief Fire and Rescue Advisor for Wales
Anthony Jones	Area Manager
Dafydd Edwards	Treasurer
Gareth Owens	Clerk and Monitoring Officer
Lisa Allington	Executive Assistant
Tracey Williams	Head of Corporate Communications
Steve Morris	Head of ICT

## 1 APOLOGIES

### Councillor

### Representing

**ABSENT**

### Councillor

Chris Hughes

### Representing

Conwy County Borough Council

There were no apologies to record.

## 2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

2.1 There were no declarations of interest.

## 3 NOTICE OF URGENT MATTERS

3.1 No notice of urgent matters had been received.

## 4 TO MAKE THE DECISION ON WHICH OPTION TO IMPLEMENT FROM THE EMERGENCY COVER REVIEW

4.1 DCFO Forshaw presented the paper on the Emergency Cover Review (ECR) which aimed to provide Members with an update following the ninth North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority (the Authority) Member led ECR Working Group (the Group).

4.2 Matt Ryan, FBU, was welcomed to the meeting and presented Members with the reasons that the FBU believed the decision should be made not to implement Option 1 or Option 1a.

4.3 At this juncture, the Clerk reminded Members that they must act reasonably and make their decision as Members of the Authority rather than Councillors representing their local constituency. He advised that extensive legal advice had been sought from an independent source and that this had made it clear that the FBU Option 4 actively left the Service in a worse position than that which North Wales Fire and Rescue Service (the Service) were in today and so would not be defensible in the case of a judicial review as implementing it would be an unreasonable act.

4.4 The recommendations as laid out in the paper were proposed by a Member and the rationale for this provided. The Member further noted that the existing stations had been built in those locations most effective at the time. These locations were no longer the most effective for the evolved Service and they felt this must be addressed.

- 4.5 A Member proposed that it be resolved that no decision be made today. They advised that they had received a multitude of correspondence from members of the public asking that neither Option 1 or Option 1a be implemented and that alternative avenues be explored to identify an option that did not mean a downgrade to wholetime stations.
- 4.6 This proposal was seconded by another Member, who further requested that a recorded vote on the recommendations laid out in the paper take place.
- 4.7 The Clerk advised that one third of the membership must agree to a recorded vote taking place, and a vote on this was subsequently held. As 13 Members voted that a recorded vote be held, this motion was therefore passed.
- 4.8 A Member proposed that an amendment to recommendation one be made, that the FBU Option 4 be taken out to further consultation and that if this were favourable, the FBU Option 4 be implemented.
- 4.9 The Clerk clarified that the comparison was between the FBU Option 4 and the current level of cover, and that the FBU Option 4 would mean a service worse than that which we have currently would be provided. He further advised that the threat of judicial review would remain, even following any consultation that might be carried out around the FBU Option 4 as it would be deemed as an unreasonable decision made by the Authority.
- 4.10 The proposal to approve the recommendations as laid out in the paper was seconded.
- 4.11 A Member stated they felt that the Group should have asked for input from the FBU at an earlier stage so that any option put forward by them could have been considered and scrutinised thoroughly prior to a decision being made. They also noted that Members should not be prepared to go against the strong legal advice received with regards to the implementation of the FBU Option 4. They also seconded the proposal that the recommendations as laid out in the paper be approved.
- 4.12 It was stated that some Members felt that they were being rushed into making a decision with regards to the ECR, and that they felt there were risks that existing firefighters would leave the Service if Option 1 or Option 1a were implemented and that this would make the situation worse.
- 4.13 Other Members spoke out, some in support of the proposal that the recommendations as laid out in the paper be approved and some in support of deferring a decision.

4.14 CFO Docx stated that since becoming CFO in 2021, the intention had always been to have a mature, open, honest and truthful working relationship with Members of the Authority and as such, it would not have been right to hide the current state of affairs in the more rural areas, not just because of a statutory duty but because that was the right thing to do for the communities of North Wales. A collaborative option with the FBU would have been preferred, but unfortunately this had not been possible. The CFO asked that Members note that the FBU Option 4 had been presented at a very late stage in the process and was not viable. She further asked that a collective decision be made by Members that benefited all the residents of North Wales.

4.15 At this stage the Chief Fire and Rescue Advisor for Wales, Dan Stephens was invited into the meeting and begun by thanking Officers for the hard work that had been put into the ECR to date. He noted that the professional advice provided was clearly sound and his recommendation was that this be followed. The most effective response model must be implemented, whilst still acknowledging the finite and limited resources available.

4.16 A recorded vote took place on the following recommendations:

- i) Note the legal advice that the FBU Option 4 cannot be recommended because to adopt it would result in an operating model that is worse than the current one and worse than Option 1 and 1a. Doing so may expose the Authority to legal challenge;**
- ii) Officially reject Option 2;**
- iii) Officially reject Option 3; and**
- iv) Agree to implement an improved variant of Option 1, this being Option 1a.**

4.17 The results of the recorded vote were announced as 12 Members against the above recommendations, 11 Members for, and three abstentions. As such, the recommendations laid out in the paper were not passed. One Member was unable to vote due to audio issues.

4.18 The CFO thanked Members for their decision which she felt was important to the communities that the Service served. Having heard their views, she proposed that work with all stakeholders continue, including the FBU, to devise an alternative permanent solution that would fulfil the aims of the ECR.

4.19 **It was resolved that:**

- i) Members request that Officers continue to work with all stakeholders to develop a new permanent option taking into consideration today's decision and the limits of the proposed budget.**

Meeting closed: 14:20