

NORTH WALES FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY

Minutes of the meeting of **North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority** held on **Monday 16 January 2023** virtually via **Zoom**. Meeting commenced at **09.00hrs**.

Councillor

Dylan Rees (Chair)
Paul Cunningham (Deputy Chair)
Bryan Apsley
Carol Beard
Michelle Walker
Tina Claydon
Adele Davies-Cooke
Chrissy Gee
Alan Hughes
Chris Hughes
John Brynmor Hughes
Marc Jones
Gwynfor Owen
Beverley Parry-Jones
Arwyn Herald Roberts
Austin Roberts (left 11:03)
Gareth A Roberts
Rondo Roberts
Gareth Sandilands
Dale Selvester
Nigel Smith
Ken Taylor
Rob Triggs
Mark Young

Representing

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

Also present:

| | |
|-------------------|----------------------------------|
| Dawn Docx | Chief Fire Officer |
| Stewart Forshaw | Deputy Chief Fire Officer |
| Richard Fairhead | Assistant Chief Fire Officer |
| Helen MacArthur | Assistant Chief Fire Officer |
| Stuart Millington | Assistant Chief Fire Officer |
| Dafydd Edwards | Treasurer |
| Gareth Owens | Clerk and Monitoring Officer |
| Lisa Allington | Executive Assistant |
| Helen Howard | Head of Finance and Procurement |
| Tracey Williams | Head of Corporate Communications |
| Pam Bass | Executive Assistant |
| Louisa Phillips | ICT Technical Manager |
| Euros Lake | Audit Wales |
| Nick Selwyn | Audit Wales |

1 APOLOGIES

Councillor

Neil Coverley
Marion Bateman
Paul Rogers
Jeff Evans

Representing

Conwy County Borough Council
Flintshire County Council
Wrexham County Borough Council
Anglesey County Council

ABSENT

Councillor

Representing

Councillor Michelle Walker was welcomed to the meeting. It was noted that Cllr Walker had been appointed as a replacement to Cllr Brian Blakely, Michelle's father, who sadly passed away recently. A moments silence was held.

2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

- 2.1 Cllr Rob Triggs declared an interest in the Part II Industrial Action item as he was an out of trade member of the Fire Brigades Union.

3 NOTICE OF URGENT MATTERS

- 3.1 There was no notice of urgent matters.

4 MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 17 OCTOBER 2022

- 4.1 The minutes of the meeting held on 17 October 2022 were submitted for approval.
- 4.2 **RESOLVED to approve the minutes as a true and correct record of the meetings held.**

5 MATTERS ARISING

- 5.1 There were no matters arising to record.

6 CHAIR'S REPORT

- 6.1 It was noted that a written paper had been supplied for this meeting to provide Members with information on the meetings and events attended by the Chair and Deputy Chair of the North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority (the Authority) in their official capacities between November 2022 and January 2023.

- 6.2 It was noted that since the paper had been written, the Chief Fire Officer, the Chair, ACFO MacArthur and the Treasurer had met with the Leaders and Chief Executives of the six Counties in North Wales on Friday 13 January 2023 in order to discuss the budget.
- 6.3 Thanks were given to the Chair, Deputy Chair and relevant officers for the extensive work put in with the North Wales Local Authority Leaders.

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

7 FINANCIAL OUTTURN 2022-23

- 7.1 ACFO MacArthur presented the Financial Outturn 2022-23 paper which provided members with an update on the revenue and capital expenditure position for 2022/23, as at 30 November 2022.
- 7.2 It was noted that management information on sickness levels of staff within the North Wales Fire and Rescue Service (the Service) would be provided to Members in the future.
- 7.3 **RESOLVED to:**
- (i) note the draft revenue and capital outturn projections for the 2022/23 financial year, as detailed within the report;**
 - (ii) note the risks associated with inflation and supply chain issues;**
 - (iii) note the risks associated with the ongoing pay negotiations; and**
 - (iv) approve the use of earmarked and general fund reserves.**

8 MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY 2023/26 AND BUDGET 2023/24

- 8.1 ACFO MacArthur presented the Medium-Term Financial Strategy and Budget paper which asked Members to approve the final 2023/24 revenue budget and relevant levies on constituent authorities, to approve the final 2023/24 capital budget, and to note the Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) 2023/26.
- 8.2 The report presented three options, further to consultation with Members, and set out the significant risks and uncertainties faced at this time.
- 8.3 Members were referred to paragraph 15 of the report. It was noted that Members had already confirmed that Option 1 was not affordable.
- 8.4 Members' attention was drawn to paragraphs 21 to 23 of the report which detailed the actions that needed to be taken in order to achieve the savings detailed in Option 3.

- 8.5 It was noted that a Fire Cover Review was currently being carried out and the results of this would be presented to Members in April 2023.
- 8.6 At this juncture, the Clerk reminded Members of their responsibility to act in the best interests of the Authority, and that the impact on their constituent councils should be secondary to this when making decisions that could affect the ability of the Authority to fulfil its statutory duties. However, Council Tax implications should also be considered.
- 8.7 A Member asked about the necessity of the significant land purchase referred to in the report. It was responded that this was needed in order to replace the hot smokehouse training centre currently utilised for training, and which had reached end of life. It was clarified that Members were not being asked to approve the spend for this land purchase at this time, but merely to acknowledge it, and that a report would be submitted later in the year in order to lay the new training centre proposals before Members in detail.
- 8.8 It was acknowledged that some funding had been withdrawn by the Welsh Government due to their own financial restraints, and that this cost would now have to be absorbed by the Service.
- 8.9 One Member expressed concern with regards to the proposed delay in purchasing Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) for Wildfires and wondered whether there was a possibility of investing in half the required PPE this year and deferring half to next year. It was responded that this remained a priority for the Service and was an option that could be looked at.
- 8.10 A Member asked for it to be noted that by his estimates, contributions by Local Authorities (LAs) had risen by a total of 30% since 2017, even though inflation rates had been relatively low over this period, and that this had already had an impact on Council Tax payers.
- 8.11 The Treasurer thanked the Chair and Vice Chair for their support with regards to having the budget endorsed by LA Leaders. He stated that he wouldn't recommend any lower an increase than 9.9% as this was already taking on a great deal of risk.
- 8.12 The Chief Fire Officer drew Members' attention to the risks associated with budget Option 3 and they were asked to consider these prior to making a decision.
- 8.13 A proposal was made that Members approve budget Option 3 which detailed a 9.9% increase in the levy to the LAs. This proposal was duly seconded with the majority in favour, two abstentions and one objection.

8.14 RESOLVED to:

- (i) note the planning work undertaken to reduce the budget requirement for 2023/24, including associated risks and uncertainties;**
- (ii) approve the Authority's revenue budget for 2023/24, in accordance with the officers' recommendation with a total budget requirement of £43.31m (Option 3) with service changes bringing the increase down to 9.9% further to consultation with Members;**
- (iii) to approve the levies on billing authorities, based on an average increase in contributions from constituent authorities of £3.9m (+9.9%), in addition to the Pension Grant Contributions to be transferred into Councils' final RSG settlement, as set out in Appendix 4;**
- (iv) to approve the Authority's capital budget for 2023/24, as set out in Appendix 3; and**
- (v) endorse the Medium-Term Financial Strategy.**

9 CAPITAL AND TREASURY MANAGEMENT UPDATE

9.1 ACFO MacArthur presented the Energy Contract Renewal paper, which provide Members with an update on the treasury management activity for 2022/23 and presented to members the proposed Capital Strategy and Treasury Management Strategy (the Strategies) incorporating the Minimum Revenue Statement for the period April 2023 – March 2024.

9.2 Members' attention was specifically drawn to pages 26 to 58 of the pack.

9.3 RESOLVED to note the:

- (i) note the mid-year position for the treasury management activities for 2022/23;**
- (ii) approve the Capital and Treasury Management Strategies and the Minimum Revenue Provision Statement for 2023/24, subject to any amendments necessary, following approval of the final revenue and capital budgets for 2023/24; and**
- (iii) in the event of amendments to the draft revenue and capital budgets for 2023/24 delegate approval of these Strategies and MRP Statement to the Executive Panel at its meeting of 20 March 2023.**

10 INTRODUCTION TO THE ROLE OF AUDIT WALES – EUROS LAKE, AUDIT WALES

10.1 Euros Lake and Nick Selwyn from Audit Wales were introduced to Members and a short presentation was given on the role of Audit Wales. It was agreed for the presentation to be sent out to Members.

- 10.2 **RESOLVED to:**
(i) note the content of the presentation.

11. CARBON EMISSIONS REDUCTION REPORT – AUDIT WALES

11.1 ACFO Millington presented the Carbon Emissions Reduction Report paper which provided Members with an overview of the Audit Wales Carbon Emissions Reduction Report following their audit of the Authority, as well as to describe the progress made in response to their findings.

- 11.2 **RESOLVED to:**
(i) Note the content of the report; and
(ii) support the Service as we continue to strive towards achieving net carbon zero neutrality by 2030.

12. BIODIVERSITY REPORT FOR APPROVAL

12.1 Tim Christensen, Environment and Climate Change Manager, presented the Biodiversity Report. This report addressed the Authority's compliance with section 6 of the Environment (Wales) Act 2016. It also provided information on proposed future planning and reporting of actions by the Authority in relation to improving biodiversity within its estate.

12.2 It was noted that this report had previously been presented before the Executive Panel.

- 12.3 **RESOLVED to:**
(i) approve the contents of the Biodiversity Report and Action Plan 2022.

13 IMPROVEMENT AND WELL-BEING PLAN

13.1 DCFO Forshaw presented the Improvement and Well-Being Plan which was intended to review the Authority's long-term objectives contained in its Corporate Plan 2021-24.

- 13.2 **RESOLVED to:**
(i) confirm the Authority's intention to continue to pursue its existing seven long-term objectives in 2023/24; and
ii) request that an updated version of the Corporate Plan 2021-24 be prepared by Officers for approval in April 2023.

14 MANCHESTER ARENA INQUIRY

- 14.1 ACFO Millington gave a presentation on the Manchester Arena Inquiry paper which had been compiled in order to provide an overview of the contents and implications of the recently published Manchester Arena Inquiry - Volume 2 report.

14.2 RESOLVED to note the information contained in the report.

15 CHIEF FIRE ADVISOR'S THEMATIC REVIEW INTO OPERATIONAL TRAINING

- 15.1 DCFO Forshaw presented the Chief Fire Advisor's Thematic Review into Operational Training paper which presented an update following the publication of the Chief Fire and Rescue Advisor (CFRA) for Wales' review into training in the Fire and Rescue Service (FRS), entitled 'Fire and Rescue Service Operational Training: Thematic Review'.

- 15.2 One Member asked if firefighters were now receiving training with regards to electric vehicles, and it was responded that the Service's new training strategy included a road traffic collision refresher course which also encapsulated alternative fuel technologies.

15.3 RESOLVED to:

- (i) Note the contents of the report; and**
- (ii) note the action plan that has been put in place, to consider the recommendations of the CFRA's review within reasonable timescales.**

16 URGENT MATTERS

- 16.1 There were no urgent matters.

At the end of Part I of the agenda, Cllr. Rob Triggs left the meeting due to a declaration of interest and it was then agreed to move into Part II of the meeting.

17 INDUSTRIAL ACTION UPDATE

- 17.1 CFO Docx presented the report which updated Members of the progress of the ballot regarding the pay offer of 5% for firefighters and control operators. It also alerted Members to the potential for industrial action, and the business continuity arrangements being put in place.

- 16.2 It was confirmed that there would be a total of two resilience appliances available to cover during periods of strike action. These would be crewed by senior managers who had now undertaken refresher training. The Service would be consulting with individual stations nearer the time of any industrial action to ascertain who would not be taking part in strike action, and would therefore also be available.
- 16.3 Since this paper was written, Welsh Government officials had encouraged the Service to put in a Military Aid to Civil Authorities (MACA) request. The army's capacity to help would be unknown until such a time as a request has been submitted.
- 16.4 Members were advised that a revised local two-year pay offer of 6% for 2022 and 5% for 2023 had now been offered to the London Fire Brigade, although there was no indication as yet that this would be agreed. If this offer were to be accepted, it would put the remainder of the country in a difficult position as similar offer was not affordable in other Service areas.

16.5 RESOLVED to note the content of the report.

Meeting closed: 11:45hrs