

North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority Executive Panel

Minutes of the Executive Panel meeting of North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority held on Monday 18 October 2021 via Zoom. Meeting commenced at 2.00pm.

Present

Councillors:

P Lewis (Chair)	Conwy County Borough Council
D Rees (Deputy Chair)	Anglesey County Council
M Dixon	Wrexham County Borough Council
R Griffiths	Anglesey County Council
R Parry	Conwy County Borough Council
A Tansley	Conwy County Borough Council
R Roberts	Wrexham County Borough Council

Also Present

D Docx (Chief Fire Officer and Chief Executive); K Finch (Treasurer); G Owens (Deputy Clerk); 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 A Davies	Denbighshire County Council
Cllr M Bateman	Flintshire County Council
M Ll Davies	Denbighshire County Council
J B Hughes	Gwynedd Council

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 26 JULY 2021

4.1 The minutes of the Executive Panel meeting held on 26 July 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 There were no matters arising.

5.2 **RESOLVED to note the update.**

6 COVID-19 UPDATE

6.1 Due to technical difficulties, ACFO Fairhead was unable to provide an update on the latest impact of COVID-19 on the Service. It was therefore **RESOLVED to email the update to Members following the meeting.**

7 AUDITED STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS AND ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT 2020/21

7.1 ACFO MacArthur presented the audited Statement of Accounts for 2020/21 including the Annual Governance Statement to Members. The report also presented the findings of the Auditor General for Wales which confirmed an unqualified audit opinion.

7.2 The Fire and Rescue Authority at its June 2021 meeting had resolved to delegate approval of the final audited 2020/21 Statement of Accounts to the Executive Panel.

7.3 It was noted that the Audit Committee had considered, in detail, the statement of accounts, the annual governance statement and the report on the audit of accounts at its meeting on the morning of 18 October 2021. Members of the Audit Committee had recommended that all documentation be approved by the Executive Panel.

7.4 M Edwards from Audit Wales explained the work undertaken by auditors on the statement of accounts and Members noted that the report issued by Audit Wales on behalf of the Auditor General for Wales confirmed an unqualified audit opinion. It was also confirmed that the Authority's Annual Governance Statement demonstrated compliance with the CIPFA/Solace Delivering Good Governance in Local Government Framework (2016).

7.5 In terms of the summary of corrections that had been made, it was noted that two misstatements identified by auditors remained uncorrected and the auditor confirmed that these were not material. However, they needed to be drawn to Members' attention due to their relevance to Members' responsibilities over the financial reporting process.

7.6 Members' attention was also drawn to the action plan on "How has the Authority Addressed the Governance Improvement Actions from 2020/21?" and noted that the actions continued to be progressed.

7.7 **RESOLVED to**

- (i) receive the recommendation of the Audit Committee at its meeting of 18 October 2021;**
- (ii) approve the audited outturn position and performance as detailed within the 2020/21 Statement of Accounts;**
- (iii) approve the governance arrangements and action plan as outlined within the 2020/21 Annual Governance Statement;**
- (iv) note the report of the Auditor General for Wales which confirms an unqualified audit opinion; and**
- (v) note the proposed letter of representation.**

8 PERFORMANCE MONITORING APRIL 2021 – SEPTEMBER 2021

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

8.2 Members were given the opportunity to ask questions about the report and of particular note was the issue of identifying those households without a working smoke alarm. The Chair encouraged all Members to share the messages that the Service issues over social media and spread the message in their communities about the importance of a having a working smoke alarm in the home and to endeavour to identify vulnerable members of the community who may still be without one.

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

9 BUDGET SETTING 2022/23

9.1 ACFO MacArthur presented the report which informed Members of the budget process, planning assumptions and timescales for setting the Authority's revenue budget for 2022/23.

9.2 Members were aware of the requirement for the Authority to set the revenue budget for 2022/23 at its meeting on 20 December 2021. The preliminary work required to establish the base budget has commenced which includes a review of current expenditure levels, key planning assumptions and risks.

9.3 Members were informed that ACFO MacArthur had met with Directors of Finance for all local authorities in North Wales and explained the Authority's process including the need to revise the budget to address the challenges being faced. Members were reminded of the challenges outlined by the Chief Fire Officer at the Fire Authority meeting in September 2021. These will be progressed at the members' workshop to be held on 2 November and included in the budget presented to members in December 2021.

9.4 **RESOLVED to**

(i) note the planning assumptions being used to set the revenue budget for 2022/23; and

(ii) note the proposal to seek approval for the 2022/23 revenue budget by the Authority at its meeting of 20 December 2021.

10 REVIEW OF IMPROVEMENT AND WELL-BEING OBJECTIVES IN THE AUTHORITY'S CORPORATE PLAN 2021-24

10.1 ACO Morris presented the report in order for Members to review the Fire and Rescue Authority's long-term objectives that are contained in its Corporate Plan 2021-24.

10.2 Members were reminded that in March of every year, the Authority publishes a Plan for the following financial year, setting out its agreed improvement and well-being objectives and outlining the actions it proposes to take towards achieving those objectives during the year. The Authority's most recent published Corporate Plan is for the period of 2021-24.

10.3 Although the relevant legislation does not stipulate how often a public body must change its objectives, there is a requirement to undertake an annual review of its well-being objectives to assess whether or not they are still relevant and appropriate. Therefore, over the coming months officers will be revisiting the content of the Authority's Corporate Plan 2021-24 in order to update the lists of planned actions underpinning each strategic objective.

10.4 The CFO commented that in terms of the situational assessment she had presented to Members at the last meeting, the proposed reviews to be commissioned fitted neatly within the annual cycle of planning and the long term objectives. Members agreed with the CFO and also felt that, based on the Annual Performance Assessment that was approved by the full Authority at its last meeting, there was no indication that a revision or change to the existing set of seven long-term objectives would be of benefit at such an early stage.

10.5 **RESOLVED to agree that the Authority confirm its intention to continue to pursue its existing seven long-term objectives in 2022/23, and requested that an updated version of the Corporate Plan 2021-24 be presented to the Authority for approval in March 2022.**

11 STRATEGIC RISK MANAGEMENT

11.1 ACO Morris presented the report which summarised the content of the Authority's strategic risk register in accordance with the Strategic Risk Management Policy.

11.2 ACFO Millington provided further information about the operational implications of the risks on the register. He detailed the work continuously being undertaken to put planned countermeasures in place to reduce the severity of the risks and also the safeguards and control measures that are in place.

11.3 It was noted that the Chair and Deputy Chair had reviewed the strategic risk register on 14 October 2021 and were content that everything possible was being done to mitigate the risks.

11.4 **RESOLVED to note the identified strategic risks that are facing the Authority.**

12 URGENT MATTERS

12.1 None.

At this juncture, the Chair thanked all officers for attending the meeting and asked them to depart the meeting in order for Members to move to part II of the meeting.

13 PRINCIPAL MANAGEMENT TEAM RESILIENCE AND PAY REVIEW

13.1 The CFO introduced the report to Members which proposed the composition of the Service's Principal Management Team. It also proposed the adoption of a set of principles to 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.

13.2 Whilst the CFO was present, Members discussed the proposed composition of the Service's Principal Management Team and the importance for the Service in moving forward to return to the established Principal Management Team structure including the Assistant Chief Officer post. Members agreed with the proposal and it was **RESOLVED to**

- (i) note the Chief Fire Officer's recommendation as to the future composition of the Service's Principal Management Team;**

At this juncture, the CFO departed the meeting. The Deputy Clerk led Members through the remainder of the report.

13.3 Having considered the content in context of the CFO's situational assessment delivered at the Fire and Rescue Authority meeting in September 2021, Members supported the proposals and it was unanimously **RESOLVED to**

- (ii) recommend to the Authority, at its meeting convened for the 25 October 2021, the adoption of the seven pay principles set out in the report; and that revised salaries as itemised in the report be applied from 1 November 2021.**