

NORTH WALES FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY
EXECUTIVE PANEL

Minutes of the **Executive Panel** of the North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority held on Monday 20 March 2023 virtually via Zoom. Meeting commenced at 14.00hrs.

Councillor

Cllr Dylan Rees (Chair)
Cllr Alan Hughes
Cllr Chris Hughes
Cllr Gareth Sandilands
Cllr Rob Triggs
Cllr Dyfed Wyn Jones

Representing

Ynys Môn County Council
Denbighshire County Council
Conwy County Borough Council
Denbighshire County Council
Gwynedd Council
Ynys Môn County Council

Also present:

Dawn Docx
Stewart Forshaw
Richard Fairhead
Stuart Millington
Helen MacArthur
Dafydd Edwards
Tracey Williams
Gareth Owens
Heledd Davies
Lisa Allington

Chief Fire Officer
Deputy Chief Fire Officer
Assistant Chief Fire Officer
Assistant Chief Fire Officer
Assistant Chief Fire Officer
Treasurer
Head of Corporate Communications
Clerk and Monitoring Officer
Atebol - Translator
Executive Assistant

1 APOLOGIES

Councillor

Cllr Carol Beard
Cllr Gareth A Roberts
Cllr Paul Cunningham (Deputy Chair)

Representing

Conwy County Borough Council
Gwynedd County Council
Flintshire County Council

ABSENT

Councillor

Cllr Chrissy Gee
Cllr Rondo Roberts
Cllr Dale Selvester

Representing

Flintshire County Borough Council
Wrexham County Council
Flintshire County Council

The Chair welcomed new Member, Cllr Dyfed Wyn Jones representing Anglesey County Council, to this, his first Authority meeting.

2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

2.1 There were no declarations of interest to record.

3 NOTICE OF URGENT MATTERS

3.1 There was no notice of urgent matters.

4 MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 12 DECEMBER 2022

4.1 It was noted that some of the constituent councils had been allocated incorrectly against Councillor names in the attendance section of the minutes of the meeting held on 12 December 2022.

4.2 **RESOLVED to:**

i) approve the minutes as a true and correct record of the meetings held, noting the stated amendment.

5 MATTERS ARISING

5.1 CFO Docx gave a brief update on the Pay Award and the associated risk for potential industrial action. It was noted that Members had been regularly briefed over the last six-months on this item.

5.2 A pay offer had been made by the National Joint Council on 07 February 2023 of 7% backdated to July last year, and a 5% offer effective July this year. The Fire Brigades Union balloted their members with a recommendation to accept this offer, and 96% voted to accept with a turnout of 84%.

5.3 The Service welcomes any settlement which avoids industrial action and supports its staff, and all preparations for business continuity arising from the potential of industrial action have now been stood down.

5.4 Members were asked to note that there was no additional funding linked to this pay offer and so the additional cost would have to be found from the Service's budget. This will require changes in emergency cover to find an appropriate balance between the challenges we face in protecting the people of North Wales and ensuring that we have a sustainable budget going forward.

6. BUDGET UPDATE

6.1 ACFO MacArthur presented the Budget Update paper which aimed to provide members with a financial update following the approval of the 2023/24 revenue budget at the North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority meeting of the 16 January 2023.

6.2 Since writing this paper, a pay offer of a set amount for green book staff had been made which exceeds the planning assumptions made within the budget for 2023/24. It is anticipated that this increased cost would amount to £130,000, should it be accepted.

- 6.3 Members were advised that the recent pay award had now resulted in an additional budget pressure of £1m, in addition to the existing pressure of £1.4m.
- 6.4 Reserves would be used to bridge the gap for financial year 2022/23 but this would leave them severely depleted. The only options available to the Service moving forward, therefore, was to look at both increasing income via the levy to the Local Authorities and to make cost efficiencies through the Emergency Cover Review currently being undertaken.
- 6.5 Those present were advised that Members of the Audit Committee had resolved to contact their local MP's in order to lobby them with regards to the provision of additional funding to cover the pressure created by the pay award.
- 6.6 **RESOLVED to:**
- i) note the conclusion of the pay negotiations for firefighters and the associated further cost pressures;**
 - ii) consider the short-term use of reserves to address the cost pressures arising from the firefighters' pay settlement;**
 - iii) note that the pay negotiations for all other staff remain outstanding at this time; and**
 - iv) note that the £2.4m underlying deficit will have unavoidable implications for future service delivery and increased levy for 2024/25.**

7. PSB WELLBEING PLANS

7.1 ACFO MacArthur presented the PSB Wellbeing Plans paper which presented to Members the draft Wellbeing Plans of the three Public Service Boards (PSB) in North Wales.

- 7.2 **RESOLVED to:**
- i) note the requirements of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015; and**
 - ii) approve the three well-being plans in their capacity as the Fire and Rescue Authority.**

8. DRAFT IMPROVEMENT AND WELLBEING PLAN, INCORPORATING ANNUAL ACTION PLAN

8.1 DCFO Forshaw presented the paper on the Draft Improvement and Wellbeing Plan, incorporating the Annual Action Plan, which informed Members of the progress being made towards compiling the draft 2023-24 revision of the North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority's (the Authority's) Corporate Plan 2021-24, for approval at the Authority's next meeting in April 2023.

8.2 It was noted that the recommendations made by Dan Stephens, Chief Fire and Rescue Advisor, would be picked up in the maintenance and development of firefighter key skills area, one of the three key challenges.

8.2 **RESOLVED to:**

- i) **note the progress being made towards compiling the 2023-24 revision of the Corporate Plan 2021-24 that will be presented for approval to the full Authority in April 2023; and**
- ii) **note the refreshed appearance of the 2023-24 Corporate Plan annual review in comparison to previous years.**

9. PAY POLICY STATEMENT

9.1 ACFO MacArthur presented the Pay Policy Statement which informed Members of the Fire and Rescue Authority's responsibilities arising from the Localism Act 2011 (the Act).

9.2 It was noted that this document did not propose any changes, but that it required approval on an annual basis.

9.3 **RESOLVED to:**

- i) **note the requirements of the Localism Act 2011; and**
- ii) **approve the Pay Policy Statement for the 2023/24 financial year.**

10 PERFORMANCE MONITORING

10.1 DCFO Forshaw presented the Performance Monitoring paper which provides information about incident activity during the first nine months of the 2022/23 financial year; performance in relation to the Authority's improvement and well-being objectives; and other notable incident activity.

10.2 Thanks were given to the staff for their continued excellent work and Members highlighted the pleasing increase in availability, following the Service restructure which took place last year.

10.3 **RESOLVED to:**

- i) **note the content of the performance monitoring report**

11 OVERVIEW OF EMERGENCY COVER REVIEW

11.1 ACFO Fairhead presented the Overview of Emergency Cover Review paper which outlined the information presented to the Members' Working Group on 14 March 2023. During this meeting, Members were given a presentation by Assistant Chief Fire Officer Richard Fairhead and ORH to introduce the purpose of undertaking an Emergency Cover Review and the methodology to be used.

11.2 It was noted that this review had originally been implemented to look at how the Service could improve fire cover across North Wales; however, it would now be necessary to also identify where any efficiencies could be made in order to alleviate the pressure on the budget.

11.3 RESOLVED to:

i) note the contents of this report.

12 OVERVIEW OF SUSTAINABILITY PLAN

12.1 ACFO Millington presented the paper on the Overview of the Sustainability Plan which outlined the information presented to the Members' Working Group on 14 March 2023. During this meeting, Members were given a presentation by the Environment and Climate Change Manager which introduced the concept of an Environmental Strategy, and discussed some of the decisions which will need to be made in order to develop one.

12.2 Members were advised that the Service worked collaboratively with the other Fire and Rescue Services across Wales where possible, and an all-Wales approach was adopted for procurement of high-value contracts.

12.3 RESOLVED to:

i) note the contents of this report.

13 URGENT MATTERS

13.1 There were no urgent matters to raise.

Meeting closed: 15:00 hrs