

**AWDURDOD TÂN AC ACHUB CANOLBARTH A GORLLEWIN
CYMRU**



MID AND WEST WALES FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY

**COFNODION
CYFARFOD YR AWDURDOD**

Ganolfan Gynadledda,
Pencadlys Y Gwasanaeth Tân Ac Achub, Caerfyrddin
10 RHAGFYR 2007

**MINUTES
OF THE AUTHORITY MEETING**

The Conference Centre,
Fire and Rescue Service Headquarters, Carmarthen
10 DECEMBER 2007

11.00am – 12.40pm

PRESENOLDEB/ATTENDANCE

Presennol yn y Cyfarfod/Present at Meeting:

CADEIRYDD/CHAIRMAN: C J Crowley

IS-GADEIRYDD/VICE CHAIRMAN: T E Evans

AELODAU/MEMBERS: Cyng/Cllrs: J S Allen-Mirehouse,
J J J Davies, K Harris, D R James,
R Lewis, C Morgan, G Phillips,
Mrs C Philpott, T Theolphilus,
J D A Thompson, Mrs Spender, C Waller,
Mrs J Dudley, P James, Mrs F M Jones,

YMDDIHEURIADAU/APOLOGIES: Cyng/Cllrs: Mrs T Devichand, G
Seabourne, M Williams,

YN BRESENNOL /IN ATTENDANCE: D Mackay, R Smith, E Aitken, A Howells,
J Maunder

1 DECLARATION BY MEMBERS OF ANY PERSONAL INTERESTS

None were declared

2 TO CONFIRM AS A TRUE RECORD THE MINUTES OF THE FIRE AUTHORITY MEETING HELD ON 29 OCTOBER 2007

The Minutes of the Fire Authority meeting held on 29TH October 2007 were confirmed and approved as a true record.

3 TO RECEIVE AND CONSIDER THE MINUTES OF THE FOLLOWING COMMITTEES

- i) Performance, Review and Audit Committee on 1st October 2007 and 19th November 2007
- ii) Standards Committee held on 9th November 2007
- iii) Personnel Committee held on 3rd December 2007

RESOLUTION

It was RESOLVED that

The minutes of the meetings listed be received and noted

4 TO APPROVE THE ANNUAL AUDIT LETTER AND TO RECEIVE A PRESENTATION THEREON BY THE WALES AUDIT OFFICE

The Chair welcomed Rob Powell and Ceri Stradling from the Wales Audit Office to the meeting, together with Gilbert Lloyd and Catherine Griffiths from KPMG who were the Authority's newly appointed Auditors.

The Annual Audit letter set out the key messages from work undertaken over the last twelve months and included a summary of audit and inspection work and reported progress against improvement actions.

The Auditor concluded that the Authority's resources were properly used and accounted for in 2006/2007 with proper arrangements in place to help it achieve economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources.

Members thanked the Auditors for their positive report and in particular for the work they had carried out for the Authority over the past few years.

RESOLUTION

It was RESOLVED that

The Annual Audit Letter be received and noted

5 TO RECEIVE AND CONSIDER THE MINUTES OF THE RESOURCES COMMITTEE HELD ON 26TH NOVEMBER AND 3RD DECEMBER AND TO APPROVE THE 2008/2009 BUDGET

Consideration was given to the budget papers which had been discussed at the Resources Committee meetings held on 26th November and 3rd December together with the minutes of those meetings.

The Chief Fire Officer reminded Members that the Special meeting of the Resources Committee had been convened at Members request to follow the meeting of the three Chairs and Chief Fire Officers with the Minister on 28th November and of Senior Officers with the six Treasurers of the Constituent Authorities the following day.

During the meeting with Dr Gibbon the main item of discussion had concerned the budget settlement for 2008/2009 and the Minister was in receipt of a letter that had previously been sent from the Chairs of the three Fire Authorities which laid out their shared concerns, particularly in relation to the impact of the changes to Firefighters' pensions and of the Firelink Scheme. The Minister gave no commitment concerning additional government grants but did recognise that the issue required further discussion for both this and subsequent years and it was noted that there would also be further discussion between the three Directors of Finance and Assembly Government officials.

During the course of the meeting with the Treasurers, they outlined the serious financial difficulties being faced within the Unitary Authorities due to the level of the settlement for 2008/09. They confirmed that the majority were not attempting to budget for 3 years but were concerned with 2008/09 only and were seeking short term solutions for that year.

It was noted that the Chief Fire Officer and Director of Finance and Procurement had written a letter to the Treasurers to request their approval for converting the remainder of the Elective Pensioners Provision to various reserves, after certain pensions commitments were funded from the provision as planned. This had been discussed with the Wales Audit Office who were satisfied subject to the agreement of the Local Authorities. It was noted that the Treasurers had acceded to this request in principle, however the level of the reserves had yet to be agreed.

The Vice Chairman confirmed that the 6 Unitary Authority Treasurers were very grateful to the Authority for the work they were carrying out in keeping the percentage budget increase as low as possible, and were aware of the problems faced by the Authority. He reminded Members of the Resources Committee that following two meetings and lengthy debate, they had reluctantly approved the budget and commended all Members to take the same view.

Members asked about the efficiency savings as agreed at the meeting of the Resources Committee meeting of 3rd December, and the Director of Finance referred to Appendix C of the report which identified savings of over 1% which had already been made. In addition, the budget had been reduced subsequent to the meeting with the Treasurers who confirmed their approval for the Authority to maintain reserves. In all, the budget had been reduced by near £1m, a 2.5% reduction. Budget holders had also been requested to identify 1, 2

or 3% savings from their budget levels for 2008/09. Whilst Members noted the work that had already been carried out they were very keen to take this further by having information on individual budget headings for further understanding and transparency. The suggestion was made that groups of Members look at individual budget areas with a view to identifying areas of efficiencies or savings in order to have the opportunity to input in to the budget making process. The Clerk confirmed that this idea had already been proposed and would be discussed further at the next meeting of the Modernisation Working Group.

An amendment was suggested to the recommendations that 'the Resources Committee carry out a detailed examination of the budget heads in January in order to identify further savings for the 2008/09 budget'. The Clerk, however, indicated that a forensic review of this nature would be impossible to carry out before 31st December, the date by which the Authority was obliged, in accordance with the requirements of the Combination Scheme Order, to consult the constituent Unitary Authorities on the budget requirement for the following financial year before determining the final budget by 15th February 2008. The amendment was not supported given the time scale and the detail of the review intended.

It was proposed, however, that an additional point be included in the resolution that Member Review Groups be formed supported by appropriate Officers who would review different budget areas with a view to identifying the potential for efficiencies in readiness for next years budget.

RESOLUTION

It was RESOLVED that

- 1) The budget requirement for 2008/09 be part funded by a contribution of £745,000 from the Elective Pensioners Provision.***
- 2) The net budget requirement (and net of the above contribution) at £41,792,718 (+5.36%) for 2008/09 be approved as a basis for consultation with the Constituent Authorities in line with the assumptions within the reports to Resources Committee of 26th November and 3rd December 2007***
- 3) That the Capital Programme be approved as a basis for consultation with the Constituent Authorities, leading to the capital financing charges shown***
- 4) That Members note the intention to continue to replace and upgrade vehicles in line with the Authority's Vehicle Replacement Programme***
- 5) Member Review Groups be formed supported by appropriate Officers who would examine different budget areas with a view to identifying the potential for efficiencies within each of them.***
- 6) Whilst it had been assumed that the majority of vehicles would be leased in the budget build up, it was agreed that the Director of Finance***

and Procurement be authorised to decide on the appropriate method of financing at the time of procurement

7) Should the Assembly recognise the pensions issues within the Final Revenue Support Grant settlement, it was agreed that these items be added back to the revenue budget levied on the Constituent Authorities, on the basis that the Constituent Authorities would have received funding for them.

6 TO RECEIVE A REPORT ON THE CONSULTATION RESPONSE TO THE ASSEMBLY ON THE PROVISIONAL SETTLEMENT

The proposed response letter from the Authority in regard to the Assembly's Consultation on the Provisional Settlement for 2008/09 was considered by Members. It was noted that this had to be with the Assembly by 4th January 2008.

RESOLUTION

It was RESOLVED that

The letter be approved as the formal response of the Authority.

7 TO RECEIVE A REPORT ON THE CO-RESPONDER SCHEME

Members were aware that the Service worked effectively with the Welsh Ambulance NHS Trust (WAT) on a number of partnerships which included sharing premises and the operation of fourteen Co-responder Units.

At the request of the Trust, a meeting had been held on 21 November 2007 between the WAT Regional Director, Director of Finance and Senior Officers from the Service. It was noted that WAT had called the meeting in order to discuss the operation and costs of the Co-responder Scheme.

The report summarised the main outcomes from the meeting which included further work by Officers to establish if improvements to the operation of the scheme could be achieved. Members were pleased that the Fire Authority was involved in this partnership and looked forward to receiving the report in due course.

RESOLUTION

It was RESOLVED that

Members note the outcomes from the meeting held with the Welsh Ambulance Trust on 21st November 2007 and the work underway to review the operation of the co-responder schemes.

8 TO RECEIVE A REPORT ON THE NATIONAL FIRE SUMMIT

The Vice Chair attended the first National Fire Summit at the Queen Elizabeth II Centre in London on 14th November 2007 which he considered was an extremely well attended and useful event.

At the Summit Councillor Evans was asked to consider attendance at a second related event in February 2008, the details of which were attached for information.

RESOLUTION

It was RESOLVED that

- 1) The Authority note the contents of the report on the 2007 Fire Summit**
- 2) The Authority agreed to support the Fire Summit in future years**
- 3) The Authority approves attendance at the National Fire Sprinkler Network Parliamentary Seminar in February 2008**

9 TO RECEIVE A REPORT ON MEMBERS' ATTENDANCE AT YPRES

Members were aware that Councillors Mr C Crowley and Mrs T Devichand represented the Fire Authority at the Armistice Day Remembrance Service at the Menin Gate, Ypres on 11 November 2007. Both Members reported that they felt honoured to be given the opportunity to represent the Authority at the Ceremony, where they laid a wreath at the Menin Gate in remembrance of those who lost their lives on the Salient during the Great War.

Councillors Mr C Crowley and Mrs T Devichand wish to extend their gratitude to the Authority for the opportunity and privilege of attending the Ceremony, and to the Colour Party for its participation in the formal proceedings.

RESOLUTION

It was RESOLVED that

The report be received and noted

10 TO RECEIVE ITEMS FOR INFORMATION

A number of items were received for information and Members were particularly pleased to be informed that after 10 years of campaigning by the Fire Service and other groups with an interest in fire safety, the Department for Children, Schools and Families had now published guidance stating that all new schools should have sprinklers fitted. The document stated that any exceptions to this would have to be justified by demonstrating that a school was low risk and the use of sprinklers would not be good value for money.