

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



MID AND WEST WALES FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY

**NOTE: THESE MINUTES ARE SUBJECT TO CONFIRMATION BY THE FIRE AUTHORITY AT ITS
NEXT MEETING**

COFNODION

CYFARFOD YR AWDURDOD TAN

**Ystafell Caer,
Pencadlys Y Gwasanaeth Tân Ac Achub, Caerfyddin
15 RHAGFYR 2014**

MINUTES

OF THE FIRE AUTHORITY MEETING

**The Caer Suite,
Fire and Rescue Service Headquarters, Carmarthen
15 DECEMBER 2014**

10.00 – 12:30

83% PRESENOLDEB/ATTENDANCE

Presennol yn y Cyfarfod/Present at Meeting:

GADEIRYDD/ CHAIR:	Councillor G Thomas
IS-GADEIRYDD/ DEPUTY CHAIR:	Councillor W E Evans
AELODAU/MEMBERS:	Cyng/Cllrs: D Cole, K Curry, J Curtice, L Frayling, TJ Hennegan, C Higgins, P James, R Lewis, R Llewellyn, S Paddison, K Pearson, P Pritchard, G Tanner, G Walker, J Warman, A Wilcox, DE Williams, J Williams
YMDDIHEURIADAU/APOLOGIES:	Cyng/Cllrs: J Bayliss, J Dudley, GM Jones, R Rees Evans
YN BRESENNOL /IN ATTENDANCE:	C Davies, E Aitken, D Daycock, D Masson, R Quin, A Francis, C Margetts, K Jones, C Jackson

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors J Bayliss, J Dudley, GM Jones and R Rees Evans.

2 DECLARATIONS BY MEMBERS OF ANY PERSONAL OR PREJUDICIAL INTERESTS

All Members present declared that they had a personal interest in matters relating to, or likely to affect their own Constituent Authority.

All Members present declared that they had a personal interest in item 8.

Councillors K Pearson and E Williams declared that they had a personal and prejudicial interest in item 8.

3 CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS / PERSONAL MATTERS

The Chair reported that Councillor W D Thomas had formally resigned as Carmarthenshire County Councillor and Fire Authority Member on 14 October 2014 and, as such, a letter of thanks had been issued on behalf of the Fire Authority in recognition of his sterling contribution to the Fire Authority. Members were also pleased to note that Councillor WD Thomas had been granted the prestigious honour of the Freedom of the County at a full meeting of the Council held on 10 December 2014. Members congratulated Councillor W D Thomas in receiving the accolade to acknowledge his enormous contribution made to the citizens of Carmarthenshire.

The Chair welcomed Mrs Julie Owens to the meeting following her return from maternity leave and conveyed thanks and appreciation to Mrs Janine Owen, who had temporarily undertaken the role of Democratic Services Officer during her period of maternity leave.

The Chair referred to the Service's recent Celebrating Success Awards Ceremony held at the Liberty Stadium on 20 November 2014 and congratulated all members of staff who had been nominated, shortlisted and received awards.

4. TO RECEIVE AND NOTE THE MINUTES OF THE RESOURCE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE HELD ON 24 NOVEMBER 2014

The minutes of the Resource Management Committee held on 24 November 2014 were considered and noted. It was, however, highlighted that the minutes should reflect that Councillors P James and A Wilcox had tendered their apologies for the meeting.

5 TO RECEIVE AND NOTE THE MINUTES OF THE PERFORMANCE AUDIT AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE HELD ON THE 20 OCTOBER 2014

The minutes of the Performance Audit and Scrutiny Committee held on 20 October 2014 were received and noted.

6 TO RECEIVE A VERBAL UPDATE ON THE JOINT PUBLIC SERVICE CENTRE

The Director of Delivery provided a verbal update on the Joint Public Service Centre Project, which would involve the merging of the Fire Control functions of Mid and West Wales Fire and Rescue Service and South Wales Fire and Rescue Service and co-locating this with South Wales Police and potentially the Welsh Ambulance Service Trust. Members were informed that a comprehensive programme of works had been developed by South Wales Police, which consisted of two scenarios, pending a definitive decision from the Welsh Ambulance Service Trust, as to whether or not they would be joining the project. The Director of Delivery reported that building and staffing arrangements would continue to proceed until March 2015, whereby the Welsh Ambulance Service Trust would have to confirm their intentions to join the collaboration, or otherwise.

Members were informed that compliance with the legal requirements had progressed, with the indemnity agreement already in place with South Wales Police. Collaboration arrangements would be drawn up in the new year to ensure that the scale and the scope of the building facilities would be fit for purpose for the needs of the Service, and thereby determine financial matters surrounding the sharing of the building.

It was reported that a new staffing structure and crewing arrangement was currently being explored, which aimed to generate a combined saving in the region of £750,000 for Mid and West Wales and South Wales Fire Authorities. The proposal was currently out for consultation with the primary Trade Union until 23 December 2014 and it was anticipated that the new staffing structure would be implemented by spring 2015. A Service Level Agreement with regard to the management of efficiencies had been signed by both Chief Fire Officers and would be published in due course.

Reference was made to the procurement of the command and control system whereby Members were informed that North Wales Fire and Rescue Service would no longer be progressing with an all-Wales procurement due to financial reasons.

The Director of Service Delivery updated Members with regard to the ongoing project communication arrangements in terms of the website, briefing days and trade union discussions to ensure openness and transparency.

Councillor WE Evans expressed his appreciation for the sterling work of all staff involved in such a worthwhile project.

Councillor K Curry expressed disappointment that the Welsh Ambulance Service Trust were yet to make a decision as to whether they would be joining the project and queried the resultant cost and planning implications. The Chief Fire Officer clarified that the Welsh Ambulance Service Trust were required to provide definitive information in relation to staffing numbers, which would then confirm whether the internal planning structure could accommodate the Trust, without any amendments to the existing planning application.

Following a query from Councillor T Hennegan, the Director of Delivery reported that there was potential for costs to rise due to the withdrawal of North Wales Fire and Rescue Service from the command and control system procurement, due to economies of scale, however these could not be quantified. Members were assured, however, that North Wales Fire and Rescue Service remained supportive of the project and that the existing levels of resilience would not be compromised in any way, rather, alternative continuity arrangements would be explored and reported to Fire Authority in due course.

In response to a query from Councillor P James, the Director of Delivery confirmed that the new Control Centre was on schedule to become operational in April 2016, however contingency arrangements would be put in place to ensure confidence in the new ICT platform during the transition period, and that the Service would ensure that its statutory responsibilities would not be breached or compromised during the migration process.

The Chair extended her gratitude for the exemplary work undertaken by all involved in the project and looked forward to receiving further updates in due course.

RESOLUTION

It was RESOLVED that the Authority note the verbal update on the Joint Public Service Centre.

7. TO RECEIVE THE JOINT REPORT OF THE CHIEF FIRE OFFICER AND THE DIRECTOR OF RESOURCES ON THE BUDGET REQUIREMENT FOR THE FINANCIAL YEAR 2015/16

The Clerk and Monitoring Officer reiterated that all Members had a duty to make decisions based on the best interests of Mid and West Wales Fire and Rescue Authority.

The Chief Fire Officer reported that the Service had improved performance during the financial year, despite the significant financial pressures placed upon public sector funding. Members were provided with an overview of the achievements made within each of the Service's Improvement Objectives in terms of Managing Risk, Managing People, Working Together, Managing Resources and Managing Performance. The following areas of performance during 2013/14 were highlighted:

The Chief Fire Officer was pleased to report the Service's successes in enhancing its community safety initiatives in order to educate and engage with the community to increase the safety of citizens and reduce anti social fire behaviour.

Reference was made to the Service's strong ethos to sustainability and environmental protection which had assisted the Service in being awarded the Gold Corporate Health Award.

Members' attention was drawn to the efficiencies already made during the financial year, including the introduction of a new crewing model at Llanelli Fire Station saving £400,000; the introduction of a new crewing model at Port Talbot Fire Station saving £143,000; achieving further savings through Early Voluntary Retirements of £163,000; and savings through the ending of protection arrangements for Station Managers of £80,000.

The Chief Fire Officer further informed Members that the Service's Performance Management processes had been recognised as best practice, not only in the Williams' Commission, but also by the Wales Audit Office.

In terms of performance, the Chief Fire Officer was delighted to report a 58% reduction in the total number of fires over the last 10 years and that overall casualty figures in 2013/14, when compared with the figures for 2003/04 showed a reduction of approximately 50%. The Chief Fire Officer highlighted the positive impact these achievements had undoubtedly had on the communities of Mid and West Wales. Members were also informed of the current work in standardising working practices and processes through the National Issues Committee which had also realised significant savings across the three Welsh Fire Authorities.

Reference was made to the recent industrial action, whereby a National dispute was currently ongoing. It was noted, however, that the Welsh Government were currently consulting on an alternative pension proposal which had led to the abeyance of strike action in Wales. Members were made aware of the robust contingency arrangements in place during the period of industrial action which had supported the Service, South Wales Fire and Rescue Service and also Welsh Government through the provision of National Assets.

The Chief Fire Officer further reported that the Service's Co-Responder Teams had attended 1875 medical emergencies during 2013/14 and in excess of 6,000 since the scheme's introduction in 1998, therefore the number of medical emergencies were now outweighing the number of fire calls. Furthermore, Members were informed that plans were currently underway to expand the scheme at no additional cost to the Authority or the Welsh Ambulance Service Trust.

Members were informed that the Authority had led an initiative which consolidated all Category 1 Responder water rescue assets within Wales and created a response group capable of a true multi agency response to large scale flooding incidents. This initiative, which had been developed with no additional funding, had been presented to the First Minister and was extremely well received.

The Chief Fire Officer stressed that the Service was not a demand led organisation, rather it was a risk management organisation. Members were urged to consider the inherent risks presented within the communities served and recognise that resources were essential in order to maintain an appropriate response capability and to continue the positive preventative work of the organisation.

The Chief Fire Officer acknowledged the financial pressures facing County Councils during adverse economic conditions, however Members were reminded of the interdependent relationship between response and prevention, therefore any reduction in preventative work would inevitably lead to an increase in operational activity, and vice versa.

The Director of Resources provided an overview of the financial background for 2015/16. Two corporate planning days had been held in previous months whereby Members, following an understanding of the severity of the financial implications for the 2015/16 Settlement and coming years, provided Officers with clear informal direction on the level of cuts to be considered for the construction of the 2015/16 budget. Members were reminded that, at its meeting on 29th September 2014, Members resolved an indicative budget requirement of £43,481,859 falling on Constituent Authorities (1.32% increase) and would require the Authority to make savings of £800,000. It was noted that this decision was predicated on the expectation of an average settlement for the Constituent Authorities of up to a -4.5% reduction, as indicated by the previous Minister for Local Government and Government Business.

Members were informed, however, that in the provisional settlement announcement an overall reduction of -3.4% was made for all Wales for 2015/16 and -3.5% average settlement for the Constituent Authorities in the Service area. Unfortunately the Minister at the same time had gone on to announce a reduction of 50% in the Authority's Community Fire Safety Grant, a reduction of £532,000, or 1.24% of the budget.

Members were referred to Appendix A of the report and were informed that, based on the 2015/16 budget level, savings in the region of £800,000 per annum would be required for a standstill budget for 2016/17.

The Director of Resources provided Members with an overview of the significant efficiencies totalling £6.4 million made over the last 10 years, equating to 15% of the budget. Such decisions had included reducing staffing numbers on stations by 27% and a 34% reduction in the number of middle Manager posts. Members were informed that the organisation was now extremely lean and that the only potential options for further reducing the budget involved decisions which would affect service delivery, which Members had previously stipulated as being unacceptable.

In response to letters received from all the County Councils' Treasurers/Leaders, it was reported that the SSA formula was determined on the basis of the population only, and therefore did not take into account key elements such as the extra costs involved in having such a large coastline or the sparsity element of the Service's work. It was therefore highlighted that the SSA formula needed to be amended by the

Constituent Authorities in order to reflect the full costs of the Authority.

Reference was made to a public survey that had been undertaken which sought views on various aspects of the Fire and Rescue Service and concluded that 82% of those questioned stated that they would prefer to pay more to stop any further cuts in service delivery.

The Director of Resources highlighted that community safety grant funding provided by the Welsh Government could be regarded as an invest to save initiative as its withdrawal could potentially have an adverse impact on the number of operational incidents within the Authority area, and therefore the significant cost of fire would impact on both social services and housing within Constituent Authorities. Members were informed that since the announcement of £532,000 reduction in the Community Fire Safety Grant Funding Members had been presented with a number of options to deal with the impact of the reduction. At its meeting on 24 November 2014 the Resource Management Committee considered and debated the budget requirement in detail and consequently recommended that a 1.99% total increase fall on Constituent Authorities, which would allow £287,000 of the lost grant work to be reinstated.

The Director of Resources stated that at the end of March 2014 there was a £1 million levy equalisation reserve available, however Members were reminded that they had since decided that £605,000 of the Levy equalization reserve had been utilized to support this year's budget. Members were advised not to utilise the remaining £400,000 of reserves to support the budget as it would be more prudent and sustainable to use that money for invest to save initiatives or to fund capital.

The Director of Resources provided a brief synopsis of each appendix contained within the report and concluded that the Resource Management Committee had recommended a budget of £43,768,859, a 1.99% increase on the Constituent Authorities. It was however noted that the real like for like increase, without the use of reserves, amounted to 0.57% and would have been further reduced to -0.1% without the loss of the community fire safety grant.

Following a query from Councillor T Hennegan concerning an article in a local newspaper relating to the Authority's expenditure on legal fees, the Chief Fire Officer clarified that the matter was unrelated to the additional review by the Wales Audit Office during 2013/14.

A number of Members commended the proactive community safety work undertaken within the organisation, which was seen as a vital community service to drive down the number of fire incidents. Members also acknowledged the significant efficiencies generated by the Service over the last 10 years and raised concerns that the organisation was at risk of becoming too lean, which would consequently adversely impact on the work of the Service. Members did however express the difficulties of being 'twin-hatted', with the necessity to balance the requirements of the Authority and safety of the communities, against the context of the economic environment and the Constituent Authorities' settlements.

Councillor P James explained the financial pressures, with budget cuts amounting to 3.4%, imposed across Constituent Authorities and provided Members with an overview of the grant funding which had been withdrawn from Ceredigion County Council. He expressed disappointment in correspondence received by the Authority from the Minister, and was of the view that a fundamental review of Local Government finance was required as the Authority was being penalised for its outstanding community safety work undertaken to date. Reference was made to the proposed Trading Arm initiative being explored by the Authority which would provide an excellent example of the Authority's proactive means of generating income and playing its part in current economic conditions. It was conveyed that the Treasurer of Ceredigion Council had budgeted a reduction of £50,000 in the Ceredigion County Council contribution to the Fire Authority in line with the budgetary reductions faced by the Council. Councillor P James concluded that discussions with the Treasurer of each Constituent Authority should be reinstated as such meetings could prove productive.

In response to a query from Councillor G Walker, the Chief Fire Officer confirmed that the 58% reduction in accidental fire deaths was correct and referred to a comparison over a 10 year period, as outlined in the Annual Improvement Plan.

A suggestion was put forth by Councillor E Williams to take a one off sum of £250,000 to reduce the budget and issue it as a one off refund to the Constituent Authorities next year.

Following a query from Councillor K Pearson, the Director of Risk confirmed that a strategic review of fuel storage had been undertaken in order to take advantage of the market and reduced costs, whilst also ensuring contingency arrangements in the event of fuel strikes.

Councillor K Pearson reported that had the Authority voted in favour of the true flat line figure for last year's budget, then the reduction in community safety grant could all have been funded this year.

Councillor C Higgins further emphasised the challenging decisions having to be made by Members, however he was of the opinion that the Authority's budgetary requirement was justified in terms of its provision of an emergency, life saving service to the public, with the preventative initiatives providing a vital role in reducing the response element of the Service.

Councillor P James enquired whether the Authority could possibly absorb half of the Community Safety grant cuts, which amounted to £287,000. The Chief Fire Officer duly responded that any reduction in Community Safety would have a direct impact on the services provided to Constituent Authorities and local communities. A number of Members echoed the sentiments of the Chief Fire Officer and reiterated that a positive correlation existed between increased community safety and reduced fire deaths, therefore it was considered prudent to continue with community safety initiatives as an invest to save option.

Members then voted on all 5 Recommendations. By a show of hands all Members present voted in favour of all 5 Recommendations.

RESOLUTION

It was RESOLVED that:

- 1) For 2015/16, the net budget at £43,768,859 (1.99% increase on the Constituent Authorities) be approved (Appendix A);
- 2) The above budget requirement would not be funded from reserves;
- 3) The Capital Programme outlined in Appendix B of the report be approved, leading to the capital financing charges shown as additional in Appendix A;
- 4) The efficiencies laid out in Appendix C be approved;
- 5) The vehicle replacement programme attached at Appendix D be approved.

8. TO RECEIVE THE DRAFT ANNUAL REPORT OF THE INDEPENDENT REMUNERATION PANEL FOR WALES 2015/16

Councillors K Pearson and E Williams retired from the meeting having previously declared a prejudicial interest regarding this agenda item.

The Clerk / Monitoring Officer presented Members with the draft annual report of the Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales (IRPW) which set out proposals for the financial year 2015/16 and sought Members' views upon changes they would wish to make to the Members' Payment Scheme 2015/16 as a consequence.

Members were informed that the consultation period to provide any representations or comments on the draft report had closed on 27 November 2014 but that Resource Management Committee had given consideration to the report at its meeting on 24 November 2014.

Members gave consideration to the provisions contained within the draft annual report which remained sensitive to the general economic climate that necessitated continuing prudence in relation to remuneration in the public sector. As such the IRPW had concluded that there would be no increases in 2014/15 levels of payments for Members.

It was also noted that the IRPW would be responsible for considering any changes to the salary of the Head of Paid Service that was significantly different to other members of staff.

The Clerk/Monitoring Officer confirmed that the Authority had previously resolved not to provide a senior salary to the Deputy Chair of the Fire Authority or to the Chairs of Committees, though the recommended senior salary from the IRPW stipulated a fee of £5,400 for those roles. The Resource Management Committee had revisited the issue at its meeting on 24 November 2014 and, due to the leadership and influencing role of the Deputy Chair, it was resolved to recommend that the role of Deputy Chair receive a senior salary but that no senior salaries be paid to the Chairs of Committees.

In response to a query raised by Councillor J Curtice with regard to Members now being taxed on travelling costs, the Director of Resources confirmed that the matter would be investigated.

Councillor R Llewellyn, as echoed by a number of other Members, outlined the significant additional work and responsibility attached to the role of Deputy Chair and a debate ensued as to whether the additional work should receive the Senior Salary remuneration. Other Members, although acknowledging the additional work involved, were of the view that payment of the Senior Salary was inappropriate in the current economic climate.

Councillor J Curtice highlighted an error in section 6.1 of the report, which should be amended to stipulate an additional payment of 3 x £3,700.

Members then voted on the recommendation. By a show of hands 5 Members present voted in favour of the recommendation, 11 Members present voted against, and there were 2 abstentions.

The recommendation was therefore lost.

RESOLUTION

It was RESOLVED that

- 1. The Fire Authority note the draft annual report and the determinations of the Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales for Welsh Fire & Rescue Authorities for 2015/2016.***
- 2. The Fire Authority do not approve a senior salary payment for the Deputy Chair of the Fire Authority or its Committee Chairs for the 2015/16 municipal year.***

Councillors K Pearson and E Williams returned to the meeting.

9. **TO RESOLVE THAT PURSUANT TO SECTION 100A (4) OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972, THAT THE PRESS AND PUBLIC BE EXCLUDED FROM THE MEETING FOR THE REASON, THAT IF THEY WERE PRESENT, IT IS LIKELY THAT THERE WOULD BE DISCLOSURE TO THEM OF EXEMPT INFORMATION WITHIN THE DESCRIPTION OF SCHEDULE 12A TO THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972, NAMELY PARAGRAPH 12, INFORMATION RELATING TO A PARTICULAR INDIVIDUAL AND PARAGRAPH 14, INFORMATION RELATING TO THE FINANCIAL OR BUSINESS AFFAIRS OF ANY PARTICULAR PERSON (INCLUDING THE AUTHORITY HOLDING THAT INFORMATION), AND THAT IT WAS IN THE PUBLIC INTEREST TO DO SO.**

The Clerk and Monitoring Officer reported that the confidentiality issues originally identified within the report were no longer applicable and, therefore in the interest of openness and transparency, concluded that there was no requirement to exclude the press and public in considering the report relating to the Managerial Structural Review.

RESOLUTION

It was RESOLVED that the report on the Managerial Structural Review be considered in open session.

10. **TO RECEIVE A REPORT ON THE MANAGERIAL STRUCTURAL REVIEW (formerly item 11)**

The Chief Fire Officer presented a report on the Managerial Structural Review for Members' consideration. Members were provided with an overview of the existing senior management structure, which had been in place since 2008. Whilst the current structure had proven to be effective in delivering a high performing service it was considered necessary to identify further efficiency opportunities in light of budgetary constraints. A reconfigured senior management structure was therefore presented to Members which included the removal of one Assistant Chief Fire Officer post and four Group Manager B posts from the establishment, in addition to the realignment of some departmental line management responsibilities. Members were assured that there would be no compulsory redundancies, however there would be a realignment of roles, following a number of potential forthcoming retirements. This would allow for a smoother transition and implementation of the new structure. The Chief Fire Officer reported that senior management restructure would realise savings of £380,000, £200, 000 of which were to support savings required in 2014/15 and some of the remainder would be reinvested into training initiatives and used to offset the reduction in grant funding.

Councillor J Warman acknowledged the Service's efforts in making efficiencies, however stressed the importance of maintaining service delivery, professionalism and expertise.

It was RESOLVED that

The Fire Authority approve the organisational restructure, realising the £380k in savings whilst retaining the six County Commands and also enabling some reinvestment into the business areas most in need.

11. TO RESOLVE THAT PURSUANT TO SECTION 100A (4) OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972, THAT THE PRESS AND PUBLIC BE EXCLUDED FROM THE MEETING FOR THE REASON, THAT IF THEY WERE PRESENT, IT IS LIKELY THAT THERE WOULD BE DISCLOSURE TO THEM OF EXEMPT INFORMATION WITHIN THE DESCRIPTION OF SCHEDULE 12A TO THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972, NAMELY PARAGRAPH 12, INFORMATION RELATING TO A PARTICULAR INDIVIDUAL AND PARAGRAPH 14, INFORMATION RELATING TO THE FINANCIAL OR BUSINESS AFFAIRS OF ANY PARTICULAR PERSON (INCLUDING THE AUTHORITY HOLDING THAT INFORMATION), AND THAT IT WAS IN THE PUBLIC INTEREST TO DO SO.
(repeated due to realignment of agenda)

RESOLUTION

It was RESOLVED that the press and public be excluded from the meeting.

12. TO CONFIRM AND SIGN AS A TRUE RECORD THE MINUTES OF THE FIRE AUTHORITY MEETING HELD ON 29 SEPTEMBER 2014

The minutes of the Fire Authority meeting held on 29 September 2014 were approved as a true records of proceedings, subject to the amendments being made.

Exemption lifted – Members of the public were now free to re-join the meeting.

13. ANY OTHER ITEMS OF BUSINESS THAT BY REASON OF SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES, THE CHAIR DECIDES SHOULD BE CONSIDERED AS A MATTER OF URGENCY PURSUANT TO SECTION 100(B)(4) OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

There were no items of urgent business.

Meeting closed 12:30.