

**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, Caerfyrddin

18 MEDI 2017

MINUTES

OF THE FIRE AUTHORITY MEETING

The Caer Suite,

Fire and Rescue Service Headquarters, Carmarthen

18 SEPTEMBER 2017

10.00 – 11.50

80% PRESENOLDEB/ATTENDANCE

Presennol yn y Cyfarfod/Present at Meeting:

Cadeirydd/ Chair:	Councillor R Rees-Evans
Is-Gadeirydd/ Deputy Chair:	
Aelodau/Members:	Cyng/Cllrs: A Brinn, M Charles, M Crowley, K Curry, C Evans, L Frayling, J Hale, S Joseph, K Laurie- Parry, R Lewis, A Llewelyn, K Madge, D Thomas, E Thomas, G Walker, J Warman, E Williams, A Woolcock, T Van-Rees
Ymddiheuriadau/Apologies:	Cyng/Cllrs: J Curtice, P James, G Tanner
Yn Bresennol /In Attendance:	C Davies, R Quin, R Thomas, K Jones, I Cray, M Harries, S Jenkins, C Flannery, D Daycock, C Jackson, C Williams, S Mansbridge, K Davies, A Butler (WAO)

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors J Curtice, P James and G Tanner.

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 a personal interest in matters relating to Item 8 of the Agenda, relating to the budget setting process.

The Chief Fire Officer declared a personal interest in Item 16 of the Agenda, namely the re-employment of retired firefighters and indicated that he would leave for that item.

The Temporary Deputy Chief Fire Officer declared a personal interest in Item 17 of the Agenda, relating to the interim arrangements surrounding the secondment of the Deputy Chief Fire Officer and indicated that he would leave for that item.

3. CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS / PERSONAL MATTERS

The Chair referred with deep regret to the recent sudden death of former Chair of the Fire Authority, Cllr J Dudley. Tributes were paid to Cllr Dudley, whose passing had sent a great sense of sorrow and shock throughout the Fire Authority and her local community. Members and Officers stood in silence as a mark of respect.

The Chair extended the Authority's condolences to Cllr J Curtice, following the recent passing of her sister.

The Chair reported that Councillor P James was currently unwell. Members extended their best wishes to Councillor James for a speedy recovery.

The Chair extended a warm welcome to Alison Butler of the Wales Audit Office who was in attendance to discuss matters relating to the Statement of Accounts.

The Chair welcomed Sarah Mansbridge and Temporary Area Manager Craig Flannery to their first meeting of the Fire Authority following their respective appointments as Head of Finance and Corporate Head of Operational Support and Improvement.

The Chair congratulated the Temporary Deputy Chief Fire Officer on his recent appointment.

The Chair referred to the array of Station Open Days held throughout the Service during the summer months, a number of which he had attended and found to be both informative and interesting. The Chair reported that he was also honoured to represent the Authority, along with the Corporate Head of Resources, at the Memorial Service in London on 10 September 2017, which he felt had been a poignant and moving experience.

4. TO CONFIRM AND SIGN AS A TRUE RECORD THE MINUTES OF THE FIRE AUTHORITY MEETING HELD ON 20 MARCH 2017

The minutes of the Fire Authority meeting held on 20 March 2017 were approved as a true record of proceedings. There were no matters arising.

5. TO CONFIRM AND SIGN AS A TRUE RECORD THE MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING HELD ON 7 JUNE 2017

The minutes of the Annual General meeting held on 7 June 2017 were approved as a true record of proceedings.

Matters Arising

Page 8 – It was reported that Councillor Mills had now replaced Councillor Rees-Evans as the Authority's representative on the Pension Scheme Advisory Board for Wales.

6 TO RECEIVE, NOTE AND APPROVE THE LOCAL PENSION BOARD DRAFT ANNUAL REPORT 2016/17

The Temporary Director of Resources reported that in order to avoid unnecessary expense to the Authority, the Chair of the Local Pension Board had requested that he be able to provide a written summary of the 2016/17 Annual Report of the Local Pension Board, which would be presented by the Temporary Director of Resources on his behalf. Members were requested to consider the future manner of reporting such reports, where attendance by the report Author may prove problematic. There was broad support for presenting such items remotely or by video link, and officers agreed to explore various options in this context, and report them to the Democratic Services Forum for consideration.

The summary of the report was provided to Members, which outlined the work carried out by the Local Pension Board during 2016/17, and which included a particular focus on improving the processes for issuing the Annual Benefit Statements. An update on the Board's Membership was also provided.

Reference was made to the increased engagement with the Pensions Regulator in line with its 'educate, enable and enforce' policy and the involvement with the Pension Scheme Advisory Board for Wales. The Temporary Director of Resources stated that the Annual Report had been considered by the Local Pension Board at its meeting on 10 July 2017 and had been recommended for approval by Members of the Fire Authority.

Councillor G Walker declared a personal interest at this point by virtue of his membership of the Firefighters' Pension Scheme. Councillor G Walker proceeded to enquire regarding costs to the Authority in respect of employees who had been afforded re-employment in line with the abatement policy and were therefore no longer contributing to the Firefighters' Pension Scheme. The Temporary Treasurer/Section 151 Officer outlined the processes relating to the Authority's contribution to the Government Actuary Department and confirmed that, taking cognisance of the National deficit to the Firefighters' pension fund, there would be no significant impact to the Authority.

The Chief Fire Officer reported that an Employer's Pension Contribution was not required for employees who were on abatement which therefore represented a saving to the Authority. It was further clarified that the Welsh Government was responsible for the management of the Firefighters' Pension Schemes and therefore there was no impact to the Authority.

Councillor Walker agreed to accept a written response from Officers relating to Firefighters' Pension Scheme costings associated with employees who had been afforded abatement.

Councillor K Curry suggested that the Authority could utilise technology in order to facilitate remote attendance at future meetings which would enable the Chair of the Local Pension Board to present his report and answer any questions in respect of the annual report. The Chair agreed that the matter would be considered by the Democratic Services Forum.

RESOLUTION

It was RESOLVED that the content of the Local Pension Board Annual Report for 2016/17 be noted and approved.

7 TO RECEIVE AND APPROVE A REPORT ON THE CODE OF CORPORATE GOVERNANCE ASSURANCE STATEMENT

The Temporary Director of Resources presented the Code of Corporate Governance Assurance Statement to Members. It was reported that the annual review of Corporate Governance was considered to be good practice and was a means of enabling the Authority to monitor the achievement of its strategic objectives, in line with the systems, processes, culture and values of the organisation. The Temporary Director of Resources drew attention to a number of areas of practice which enhanced the Authority's scrutiny and governance arrangements and noted that the number of internal audit days had increased to 93 days. Members were asked to note that the main changes to the report centred upon the issues in respect of finance/HMRC and progress made in this regard.

It was further reported that the Performance, Audit and Scrutiny Committee, at its meeting on 24 July 2017, had considered and recommended approval of the Statement of Assurance set out at Appendices 1 and 2 of the report, for signature by the Chair of the Authority and the Chief Fire Officer, leading to its inclusion in the Statement of Accounts.

RESOLUTION

It was RESOLVED that the Updated Code and the Statement of Assurance be approved for signature by the Chair of the Authority and the Chief Fire Officer, for inclusion in the Statement of Accounts.

8 TO RECEIVE AND APPROVE THE JOINT REPORT OF THE CHIEF FIRE OFFICER AND THE TREASURER ON THE BUDGET INDICATIONS FOR THE FINANCIAL YEAR 2018/19

The Chief Fire Officer presented the report on the budget indications for the financial year 2018/19 which had been informed and directed by the Budget Corporate Planning days held in July and September 2017, whereby Members provided informal indication on the budget levels to be considered for the forthcoming year. At those meetings, in the context of the financial implications surrounding the 2018/19 settlement, and in line with the significant efficiencies already achieved within the Authority, Members had proposed a 2.8% (£1.267m) increase in the budget falling on the Constituent Authorities, which represented a 'standstill' service level and was based upon assumptions of known budget pressures, inflation increases and the provisional pay award under negotiation.

Members were provided with an overview of the substantial real cash efficiencies made over the last 10 years from a combination of operational and corporate initiatives. An overview of the Service Review Team commissioned in October 2015, including its remit and progress to date, was also provided to Members.

The Chief Fire Officer referred to Appendix B of the report which outlined the efficiencies and pressures for 2018/19. Members were reminded that Officers had reduced the budget requirement from the original indication of £1.9m to £1.267m under the direction and guidance of Members during the Corporate Budget Planning days. Consideration was also given to Appendix A of the report which set out the indicative budget, and it was noted that the ongoing negotiations on the national pay award was expected to be greater than 2% and that therefore in the light of this, the budget would be reviewed again.

The Chief Fire Officer noted that presentations would be provided to the Constituent Authorities again this year to outline the importance of the service provision, and to highlight the value for money currently being obtained from the Service. Members were reminded that it was the responsibility of the Constituent Authorities, through the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004 and the powers contained within the Combination Scheme Order, to discharge their duties to maintain an effective Fire and Rescue Service in their areas through the Combined Fire and Rescue Authority. The Fire and Rescue Authorities' unique funding methodology was reiterated to Members and it was

also emphasised that there was no requirement for the Authority's budget increase/decrease to reflect the Constituent Authority settlements.

Councillor J Warman commented on the level of efficiencies already realised by the Service and emphasised the need to support the proposed budget to ensure an effective fire and rescue service which he felt demonstrated the best use of resources and value for money to the public in order that the safety of local communities was not compromised in any way.

Councillor A Llewelyn commented that constituents needed to be consulted upon to raise awareness that the Fire and Rescue Authority was funded by Constituent Authorities and it was suggested that the Council Tax contribution for the Fire Service should appear separately on the statement in order for constituents to understand what their contributions were for. The Chief Fire Officer referred to the on-going public survey which had sought views on various aspects of the Fire and Rescue Service and the results to date indicated that 70-80% would prefer to pay more to stop any further cuts in service delivery. It was further confirmed that should Constituent Authorities wish to exemplify the contribution figure to the Fire and Rescue Authority within the council tax statements, this would be supported by the Chief Fire Officer.

Councillor K Madge emphasised the paramount importance of ensuring that health and safety would not be compromised and therefore noted his support for the proposed budget put forth for consideration. These sentiments were echoed by a number of other Members, including Councillors Hale, Woolcock and Van-Rees.

Councillor D Thomas highlighted the significant cutbacks facing the City and County of Swansea Council and expressed the view that the Fire Authority should also therefore consider a reduced budget for 2018/19.

RESOLUTION

It was RESOLVED that: -

- 1) the indicative budget proposal be validated for inflation, estimated pay awards and other commitments.***
- 2) this would result in an increase of 2.8% on the Constituent Authorities.***
- 3) the additional insurance costs continue to be paid for by supporting the budget by £150k from reserves.***
- 4) there would be no further funding of the revenue budget from reserves.***
- 5) the resulting budget would be a minimum of £46,852,874 with £46,702,874 falling on the Constituent Authorities (an increase of £1,267,034 or 2.8%) and £150,000 falling on reserves.***

9 TO RECEIVE AND APPROVE THE ANNUAL PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT 2016/17

The Head of Corporate Communications and Business Development presented a report on the Annual Performance Assessment for 2016/17 which outlined the Authority's performance against the improvement objectives set out within the Annual Improvement Plan and required publication by 31 October 2017. Members considered the various objectives set, and the performance of the Service in relation to them.

RESOLUTION

It was RESOLVED that the Annual Performance Assessment for 2016/17 be approved for publication by 31 October 2017.

10 TO RECEIVE A VERBAL UPDATE ON THE STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS FOR THE FINANCIAL YEARS ENDED 31 MARCH 2016 AND 2017

The Temporary Treasurer/Section 151 Officer reported that due to the delays with the completion of the audit for the 2015/16 statement of accounts, the 2016/17 accounts set out at Appendix 1, remained unaudited and were therefore presented to Members for information only. It was reported that the 2015/16 financial statements were expected to be certified in October 2017, which would then enable the audit of the 2016/17 statement of accounts to commence in November 2017, prior to being presented for Members' approval at the Fire Authority meeting scheduled for 5 February 2018.

Ms Alison Butler of the Wales Audit Office referred to the timescales reported by her colleague, Mr M Jones, at the Performance, Audit and Scrutiny Committee meeting in July 2017 and Members were assured that the timetable for the 2017/18 Statement of Accounts was expected to be realigned with other Local Government Bodies. Ms Alison Butler made reference to the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2014 which stipulated that the Authority was required to approve and sign the Statement of Accounts by 30 September. It was highlighted that should the Authority resolve not to approve the accounts at this time, a note would be recorded to that effect within the audit report. In response, the Temporary Treasurer/Section 151 Officer clarified that as she was unable to sign the 2016/17 statement of accounts due to the auditing delays, Members were requested to note the report for information only at this stage.

RESOLUTION:

It was RESOLVED that the verbal update regarding the Statement of Accounts for the financial years ended 31 March 2016 and 2017 be noted.

Ms A Butler departed the meeting at this point.

11 TO RECEIVE AND APPROVE THE DRAFT CORPORATE PLAN FOR 2018-2023

The Head of Corporate Communications and Business Development presented a report on the Draft Corporate Plan for 2018-2023, set out at Appendix A, which had been developed in accordance with the requirements of the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2009. Attention was drawn to Appendix A of the report whereby Members considered the Draft Corporate Plan for 2018-23 which set out the Service's five-year strategic priorities and the 12 Draft Improvement Objectives for 2018/19.

The Head of Corporate Communications and Business Development reported that the Corporate Plan and associated Improvement Objectives had been further refined and developed in consultation with the Annual Improvement Planning Member Working Group at the Corporate Planning events, and was scheduled to be published for a 10-week public consultation commencing on 2 October 2017.

RESOLUTION

It was RESOLVED that the Draft Corporate Plan 2018-23 be approved for public consultation.

12 TO RECEIVE AND APPROVE A REPORT ON THE RELEASE OF FUNDS FROM RESERVES TO FUND FIREWATCH PROJECT SOFTWARE

The Temporary Treasurer/Section 151 Officer presented a report which recommended the transfer of £297k from Reserves for the funding of software to deliver the Firewatch Project. It was explained that the Firewatch software system represented an invest to save initiative and would enable the development of digital technology within the Service in line with its digitisation programme.

The Chief Fire Officer highlighted the benefits derived from consolidating a number of disparate software systems, particularly in terms of enhanced business processes in the on-call sector, improved service management and enhanced establishment control and workforce planning.

In response to a query from Councillor D Thomas, the Temporary Treasurer/Section 151 Officer clarified that the software system would change working practices, and the future budget would be updated once the savings had been identified following the system's implementation and development.

RESOLUTION

It was RESOLVED that the transfer of funding from Reserves for Firewatch Project software of £297k be approved.

13 TO RECEIVE AND APPROVE A REPORT ON THE REAPPOINTMENT OF INDEPENDENT MEMBERS OF THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE

The Clerk/Monitoring Officer reported that Mr Hywel Jones, Mr Richard Jenkins and Ms Gail Storr were appointed as Independent Members of the Standards Committee in 2001 and had indicated that they wished to be considered for reappointment for a further consecutive and second term of office in accordance with the provisions laid out in the Standards Committees (Wales) (Amendment) Regulations 2006.

Members were asked to agree and ratify the appointments, and were assured that the Independent Members had each taken a proactive approach to their role on the Standards Committee and continued to show leadership and integrity within the role. It was also explained that their reappointment to the Standards Committee would preserve continuity of experience and avoid the cost and delay of a lengthy recruitment process.

RESOLUTION

It was RESOLVED that Mr Hywel Jones (Chair of the Standards Committee), Ms Gail Storr (Deputy Chair of the Standards Committee) and Mr Richard Jenkins be reappointed to the Standards Committee for a further consecutive term of office of up to 4 years.

14 EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

RESOLUTION

It was RESOLVED 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;

Paragraph 14: information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the Authority holding that information);

Paragraph 18: information relating to any action taken to be taken in connection with the prevention, investigation or prosecution of crime.

15 TO RECEIVE AND NOTE A REPORT ON THE JOINT PUBLIC SERVICE CENTRE PROJECT (JPSCP)

The Temporary Assistant Chief Fire Officer presented a report to Members on the Joint Public Service Centre Project (JPSCP).

RESOLUTION

It was RESOLVED that the progress of the Joint Public Service Centre Project be noted.

The Chief Fire Officer Departed the meeting at this point.

16 TO RECEIVE AND NOTE A REPORT ON THE RE-EMPLOYMENT OF RETIRED FIREFIGHTERS

The Clerk/Monitoring Officer presented a report on the re-employment of retired firefighters to Members.

RESOLUTION

It was RESOLVED that the recommendation within the report be noted.

*The Temporary Deputy Chief Fire Officer departed the meeting at this point.
The Chief Fire Officer re-joined the meeting at this point.*

17 TO RECEIVE AND NOTE A REPORT REGARDING THE SECONDMENT OF THE DEPUTY CHIEF FIRE OFFICER AND INTERIM ARRANGEMENTS

The Chief Fire Officer presented a report on the secondment of the Deputy Chief Fire Officer (DCFO), and the interim arrangements put in place as a result of this.

RESOLUTION

It was RESOLVED that the interim arrangements put in place to maintain service delivery during the secondment of the DCFO be noted.

Exclusion of the press and public lifted – open session resumed.

18 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. However, the Chair agreed to allow Councillors T Van-Rees and K Curry to comment regarding the multi-agency exercise held on the army range at the FIBUA Village, Sennybridge on Saturday 16 September 2017. Councillors T Van-Rees and K Curry commended the exercise which tested the interoperability between services and also the core skills of crews and requested that an

appropriate letter of appreciation be issued to the military. The Chief Fire Officer agreed to do this.

Meeting closed 11.50.