

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
4 CHWFROR 2019

MINUTES

OF THE FIRE AUTHORITY MEETING

The Caer Suite,
Fire and Rescue Service Headquarters, Carmarthen
4 FEBRUARY 2019

10.00 – 10.56

72% PRESENOLDEB/ATTENDANCE

Presennol yn y Cyfarfod/Present at Meeting:

Cadeirydd/ Chair: Councillor R Rees-Evans
Is-Gadeirydd/ Deputy Chair: Councillor J Curtice

Aelodau/Members: Cyng/Cllrs: C Anderson, G Breeze, A Brinn, K Broom, K Curry, L Frayling, T Hennegan, S Joseph, R Lewis, C Mills, D Thomas, E Thomas, G Walker, J Warman, E Williams, A Woolcock.

Ymddiheuriadau/Apologies: Cyng/Cllrs: M Charles, M Crowley, C Evans, J Hale, P James, A Llewelyn, T Van-Rees

Yn Bresennol /In Attendance: D Daycock (Clerk/Monitoring Officer), R Hemingway (Section 151 Officer Representative), C Davies (CFO), R Quin (T/DCFO), R Thomas (T/ACFO), K Jones (ACO), I Cray (AM), M Harries (AM), S Jenkins (AM), P Greenslade (T/AM), C Jackson (Head of CCBD), S Mansbridge (Head of Finance)

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors M Charles (Council Business), M Crowley, C Evans, J Hale, P James, A Llewelyn and T Van-Rees.

2 DECLARATIONS BY MEMBERS OF ANY PERSONAL OR PREJUDICIAL INTERESTS

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

All Members present declared a personal interest in matters relating to the budget setting process, set out at items 5 and 6 of the agenda.

All Officers affected by the report declared that they had a personal interest in relation to item 9 of the agenda, namely the Pay Policy Statement 2019/20.

3 CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS / PERSONAL MATTERS

The Chair welcomed the observers to the meeting and reminded those present that the meeting was audio recorded and that the recording of the meeting would be published on the Service's external website.

The Chair congratulated T/ACFO Thomas, who would be taking up his new role as Deputy Chief Fire Officer of Mid and West Wales Fire and Rescue Service from 30 March 2019.

The Chair was delighted to announce that the Annual Christmas Carol Service held at Llanrhystud Church on 12 December 2018 had raised a total of £517.02 which would be shared between the Fire Fighters Charity, Salvation Army and Samaritans.

The Chair reported that a number of Members had been unable to attend the Fire Authority's scheduled annual visit to the Earlswood training facility on Thursday 21 February 2019 due to other Council commitments; accordingly it was requested that the Democratic Services Officer reschedule the visit to enable these Members to attend and thereby optimise attendance.

The Chair informed Members that he had represented the Fire Authority at the Royal National Lifeboat Institution (RNLI) service recently held in Aberystwyth.

The Chair confirmed that the Authority's response to the Welsh Government's White Paper 'Reform of Fire and Rescue Authorities in Wales' consultation would be circulated to Members following its finalisation later that day. Members were also encouraged to submit individual responses to the consultation document prior to the deadline of Tuesday, 5 February 2019.

4 TO CONFIRM AND SIGN AS A TRUE RECORD THE MINUTES OF THE FIRE AUTHORITY MEETING HELD ON 10 DECEMBER 2018

The minutes of the Fire Authority meeting held on 10 December 2018 were approved as a true record of proceedings.

Matters Arising

Page 8, Paragraph 5: Councillor G Walker disputed the Chief Fire Officer's assurance that Members were not required to submit freedom of information requests to obtain statistics relating to the availability of appliances. Cllr Walker drew attention to an email issued to him by an Officer within Neath Port Talbot County Command which he stated stipulated that a senior officer had stated that requests for information in this regard should be made as requests under, the Freedom of Information Act. The CFO clarified, for the avoidance of doubt, that he had never personally stipulated that Members were required to request information by way of the Freedom of Information Act, as claimed by Cllr Walker. Rather, the CFO reiterated that he had encouraged Cllr Walker on several occasions to always contact the Executive Leadership Team with any requests for information, and that the team would endeavour to assist with any such requests for statistics or other information. The CFO was further disappointed to note that Cllr Walker had declined any engagement with the Executive Leadership Team in this regard.

In response to a query by Cllr D Thomas, the CFO explained to Members that the Executive Leadership Team would be best placed to ensure the timely provision of information to Members as response timescales regarding requests to local stations could be hampered by activity levels and the level of detail requested.

In response to comments made by Cllr Walker in respect of the decision to revise the crewing arrangement at Pontardawe Fire Station, the CFO emphasised that this matter had been considered by Members, Trade Union representatives and Senior Officers during the budget setting events in the light of the potential significant financial implications that could be incurred following the ruling of the unlawful crewing system at South Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service. Furthermore, the Clerk/Monitoring Officer clarified that Cllr Walker had not voted against the alternative crewing arrangement as this had been an operational matter and not a decision taken by the Authority, and that he had in fact voted against noting a report which contained information regarding the crewing arrangements.

5 TO RECEIVE AND NOTE A REPORT ON THE REVENUE AND CAPITAL BUDGET MONITORING REPORT 2018/19 AS AT 30TH NOVEMBER 2018

All Members declared a personal interest regarding this item.

The Section 151 Officer Representative presented the budget monitoring report to Members, which summarised the revenue budget and capital programme position for the 2018/19 financial year, as at 30 November 2018 and which had been considered by the Resource Management Committee at its meeting on 21 January 2019.

Members' attention was drawn to Appendix 1 of the report, which showed a forecast outturn of £46.617m as at the 30th November 2018 and represented a projected underspend of £192k. Members were provided with an overview of the rationale for the variances, as set out in section 3 of the report.

Members were provided with an overview of the expenditure on capital projects as at 30 November 2018, compared against the Approved Capital Programme set out in Appendix 2 of the report. Members were further informed that the forecast outturn amounted to £5.191m and represented an underspend of £230k. It was also recognised that the Northern Area Development project was under review and could result in further slippage.

Members received a breakdown of the grants allocated for 2018/19, whereby a total of £3.481m revenue and £800k capital had been provided on an all-Wales basis (shared with North and South Wales Fire Authorities). It was reported that four specific revenue grants totalling £1.972m had been awarded to Mid and West Wales Fire Authority, including £1.250m for the GovTech Catalyst innovation challenge.

The Section 151 Officer Representative concluded by confirming to Members that all activity was in line with the approved prudential and treasury management indicators for 2018/19, as set out in Appendix 4 of the report.

RESOLUTION

It was RESOLVED that the report be noted.

6 TO RECEIVE AND APPROVE THE JOINT REPORT OF THE CHIEF FIRE OFFICER AND THE CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER ON THE BUDGET INDICATIONS FOR THE FINANCIAL YEAR 2019/20

All Members declared a personal interest regarding this item.

The CFO provided an overview of the report, which was a culmination of several budget planning discussions held with Members throughout the year, and which set out the budget requirement for 2019/20, the Medium Term Financial Plan and the 5-year Capital Programme.

Members were reminded that a provisional budget increase of 2.48% falling on Constituent Authorities, and a further £170,00 funded from reserves, had been approved at the Fire Authority at its meeting held on 10 December 2018 and therefore amounted to a net budget requirement of £47,987,670. The Chief Fire Officer noted that for presentation purposes only, the indicative budget for 2020/21 – 2022/23 had also been included.

The CFO then drew Members' attention to Section 6.4 of the report, specifically the ongoing National Pay discussions, which remain unresolved, and then advised that any increase in pay above the planned 2% would need to be funded centrally as the Authority would not be in a position to support such an increase.

The CFO confirmed that letters had been issued to the Constituent Authorities following the December Fire Authority meeting in accordance with the regulatory requirement of the Combination Scheme Order 1995, and that no formal responses had been received to date. The CFO also referred to the meeting held with the respective Constituent Authorities' Treasurers at Service Headquarters on 18 October 2018 which he felt had provided Treasurers with a clearer understanding of the budget pressures facing the Fire Authority in the coming year. The CFO confirmed that, at the request of Members, he would be approaching the six Constituent Authorities with a view to presenting the full Council meetings of the Local Authorities with an overview of the work of the Fire Authority and the budget pressures on the Authority and the implications of this.

The Section 151 Officer Representative provided the financial background and context surrounding the budget requirement recommended for 2019/20 in the light of the final settlement announced by Welsh Government on 19 December 2018.

The proposed detailed revenue budget for 2019/20 was presented to Members as set out at Appendix B of the report. Members' attention was drawn specifically to the additional pressure of £1.88million identified at Section 6.5 of the report as a result of the Firefighter pension fund employers' contribution forecast to increase from 18.7% to 28.3% with effect from 1 April 2019. The Section 151 Officer Representative set out the National position for public sector pensions in this regard, including Police and Teacher settlements in England and explained that Her Majesty's Treasury had provided confirmation of a 1 year only figure of £4.7billion for 2019/20 for the whole of the UK, following which a permanent resolution of the issue would be confirmed as part of the forthcoming Westminster Comprehensive Spending Review.

The Section 151 Officer Representative explained that whilst it had been indicated that the additional costs 2019/20 would be supported by Her Majesty's Treasury, no formal confirmation had been received to that effect as yet. In the light of the current situation, the Section 151 Officer Representative advised Members to approve the budget recommendations as set out in the report, with the addition of two further recommendations, as follows:

- *Should there be a shortfall of up to £250k in 2019/20, delegated authority be given to the Section 151 Officer, in consultation with the Chief Fire Officer, to provide funding from reserves for one year only;*
- *Should any possible shortfall exceed this value once the grants information is confirmed, an extraordinary meeting of the Fire Authority to be called at which different financial options can be discussed.*

Upon being put, the amendment was carried.

In response to a query by Cllr G Walker, the Director of Resources confirmed that on-call employees fulfilling temporary wholetime contracts were provided with the opportunity to contribute to the Firefighters' Pension Fund, though it was recognised that the monetary value was relatively inconsequential in the light of the overall Government Pension fund.

Councillor J Warman commended Officers on the construction of the budget proposal, together with the level of consultation and engagement undertaken with Members throughout the various budget setting events. Reference was made to the Police and Crime Commissioner structure, together with the proposed Welsh Government's reform of Fire and Rescue Authorities' governance and financial arrangements. Cllr Warman expressed the view that the Service's achievements to date, together with the aspirations set out in the Corporate Plan, against a backdrop of financial austerity and additional pressures, was in his view, a measure of success which was to be commended. Cllr Warman commented that he considered the Authority's current structure to be both democratic and effective which was clearly and objectively evidenced in the Service's performance. Accordingly, Councillor J Warman emphasised the need to support the proposed budget which he felt demonstrated the best use of resources and value for money to the public.

RESOLUTION

It was RESOLVED that

- 1. The Medium-Term Financial Plan at Appendix A be approved.***
- 2. For 2019/20, a net budget of £47,987,670, with £170,000 falling on reserves and £47,817,670 falling on the Constituent Authorities (an increase of 2.48% on the Constituent Authorities) (Appendix A) be approved.***
- 3. For 2019/20, the detailed revenue budget attached at Appendix B be approved.***
- 4. The Capital Programme for the period to 2022/23 at Appendix C be approved.***
- 5. It be acknowledged by the Fire Authority that the Medium Term Financial Plan is based on the assumption that the Firefighter pension fund employers' contribution increase will be funded in full by Her Majesty Treasury (via the Welsh Government).***
- 6. Should there be a shortfall of up to £250k in 2019/20, delegated authority be given to the Section 151 Officer, in consultation with the Chief Fire Officer, to provide funding from reserves for one year only;***

7. Should any possible shortfall exceed this value once the grants information is confirmed, an extraordinary meeting of the Fire Authority be called at which different financial options can be discussed.

7 TO RECEIVE AND APPROVE THE DRAFT CORPORATE PLAN 2019-2024

The TDCFO presented the Corporate Plan for 2019-2024, which set out the strategic direction of the Service.

It was reported that the Draft Improvement and Wellbeing Objectives for 2019/20 were designed to be fluid and adaptable to meet the needs of the Service and had therefore been aligned to the Service's six Strategic Aims. A synopsis of the Strategic Aims was provided to Members in terms of the Environment, Partnerships, Future, Communities, People and Resources. Members were reminded that the Improvement Objectives had been developed to enable the Service to meet its priorities and furthermore, that the Corporate Plan put forth for Members' consideration combined the statutory reporting requirements set out within the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011 and the requirements emanating from the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015.

The T/DCFO provided an overview of the consultation process which had been undertaken during a 10-week period between 01 October 2018 and 7 December 2018 to gather the views of the public, key stakeholders and staff on the proposals contained within the Corporate Plan. The T/DCFO was delighted to report that a total of 116 responses had been received in total, which represented a 58% increase compared with the previous consultation process, and could be attributable to the extensive public engagement undertaken by way of face to face roadshows and social media initiatives. Members were assured that all responses had been taken into consideration, and the majority of the feedback received had, in the main, been positive. In response to a query by Cllr A Woolcock, the T/DCFO confirmed that the consultation feedback highlighted that some respondents were uncertain whether the correct measures for success were in place and accordingly, this issue was being further explored with a view to providing further details within the Corporate Plan.

The T/DCFO reported that the Annual Improvement Planning Member Working Group had reviewed the Corporate Plan in detail at its meeting on 28 January 2019 and, subject to minor amendments in terms of content, grammar, terminology and updating of statistics, Members had recommended that the Fire Authority approve the document for publication on 1st April 2019.

The Chair commended the Corporate Communications and Business Development team members involved in the development of the Corporate Plan and promotion of the consultation document which had resulted in a significant increase in the number of consultation responses received.

RESOLUTION

It was RESOLVED that further to the responses received to the consultation (Appendix 2) and on the advice of the Annual Improvement Planning Working Group, (meeting held on Monday 28/01/2019):

- i. The responses of the consultation (Appendix 2) be noted;***
- ii. The Authority's Corporate Plan 2019-2024 (Appendix 1) be approved for publication.***

8 TO RECEIVE AND APPROVE CHANGES IN CONTRACT STANDING ORDERS AND PROCUREMENT PROCEDURAL GUIDANCE

The Corporate Head of Resources presented a report on the proposed changes in contract standing orders and procurement procedural guidance. It was reported that the standardisation of Contract Standing Orders had been undertaken on an All-Wales basis in 2014, and following that period of consolidation, a review of the documentation was considered appropriate in order to further refine processes.

A summary of the proposed changes, as set out at Appendix 3 of the report, was considered by Members.

The Corporate Head of Resources provided an overview of the electronic platform (sell2wales) which had replaced traditional submission of paper tender applications; and accordingly the Service had been highlighted for good practice in a Wales Audit Office report as an Organisation that advertised all its contracts on Sell2Wales.

In response to a query by Cllr D Thomas, the Corporate Head of Resources confirmed that the European procurement thresholds would be applicable for the procurement of vehicles in line with the Authority's vehicle replacement programme.

RESOLUTION

It was RESOLVED that the Contract Standing Orders be approved.

9 TO RECEIVE AND APPROVE A REPORT ON THE PAY POLICY STATEMENT 2019/20

All Officers affected by this item declared a personal interest.

The Section 151 Officer Representative presented the Pay Policy Statement 2019/20 which was required to be published by 31 March annually under section 38(1) of the Localism Act 2011. Attention was drawn to the Appendices of the report which articulated the Authority's policies towards a range of issues relating to the pay of its workforce and which sought to demonstrate the openness and transparency of the process adopted by the Authority. The Section 151 Officer Representative reported that the pay awards for the reporting period had been based on a 2% increase for all

employees, though it was emphasised that this remained subject to the outcome of ongoing negotiations at National level.

Members' attention was drawn to Section 15 of the report which had been updated to reflect the inclusion of other employee benefits and to Section 16 which had been updated to include payments on termination for non-Chief Officers.

RESOLUTION

It was RESOLVED that the Pay Policy Statement for 2019/20.

10 TO RECEIVE AND APPROVE THE CERTIFICATE OF COMPLETION OF AUDIT OF FINANCIAL STATEMENTS 2016/17

The Section 151 Officer Representative introduced the Statement of Accounts for 2016/17, (which had been made available to Members electronically) which was set out at Appendix A.

The Section 151 Officer Representative explained that whilst the audited Statement of Accounts 2016/17 had been approved by Fire Authority on 10th December 2018, the audit could not have been formally concluded until the Auditor General had completed his consideration of matters relating to the Fire Fighters' Pension Fund. Members were informed that this work had now been completed and that the Auditor General was able to certify that he had completed the audit of the accounts in accordance with the requirements of the Public Audit (Wales) Act 2004 and the Code of Audit Practice issued by the Auditor General for Wales. Accordingly, in the light of the above, the Fire Authority was required to re-approve the audited Statement of Accounts 2016/17 including the revised audit opinion, as set out at Appendix 1.

RESOLUTION

It was RESOLVED that the

- i. Certificate of Completion of Audit be noted;*
- ii. Audited Statement of Accounts for 2016/17 including the revised audit opinion be re-approved.*

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

There were no further items of urgent business.

The meeting closed at 10:56