

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 PERFORMANCE, AUDIT AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE AT ITS NEXT MEETING

COFNODION CYFARFOD Y PWYLLGOR ADOLYGU AC ARCHWILIO PERFFORMIAD MINUTES OF THE PERFORMANCE AUDIT AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

**DYDD LLUN, 13 MAI 2019
MONDAY, 13 MAY 2019**

**YSTAFELL CAER, PENCADLYS Y GWASANAETH TÂN, CAERFYRDDIN
CAER SUITE, FIRE SERVICE HEADQUARTERS, CARMARTHEN**

10.00 – 11.30

93% PRESENOLDEB/ATTENDANCE

Presennol yn y Cyfarfod/Present at Meeting:

CHAIR	Cllr D E Williams
IS-GADEIRYDD/DEPUTY CHAIR:	Cllr C Anderson
AELODAU/MEMBERS:	Cyng/Cllrs: G Breeze, K Broom, K Curry, J Curtice, L Frayling, T Hennegan, R Lewis, A Llewelyn, T Van-Rees, G Walker, J Warman
YMDDIHEURIADAU/APOLOGIES:	Cyng/Cllrs: M Crowley
YN BRESENNOL /IN ATTENDANCE:	D Daycock (Clerk/Monitoring Officer), R Hemingway (Section 151 Officer Representative), R Thomas (DCFO), K Jones (ACO), I Cray (ACFO), S Jenkins (AM), M Harries (AM), C Flannery (AM), P Greenslade (AM), C Jackson (Head of CCBD), C James (External Auditor – Wales Audit Office), H Pugh (Internal Auditor – Carmarthenshire County Council), C Powell (Internal Auditor – Carmarthenshire County Council), Cllr R Rees-Evans (observer).

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor M Crowley.

2 DECLARATION BY MEMBERS OF ANY PERSONAL OR PREJUDICIAL INTERESTS

All Members present declared that they had a personal interest in any business relating to, or affecting their own Constituent Authority.

3 CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS AND PERSONAL MATTERS

The Chair referred to the recent funeral service of Fire Authority Member, Cllr Paul James. Tributes were paid to Cllr James, whose untimely passing had sent a great sense of sorrow and shock throughout the Fire Authority and also his local community. Members acknowledged Cllr James' enthusiasm, passion and dedication to the Fire Authority whose contribution would be sorely missed. Members and Officers stood in silence as a mark of respect.

The Chair extended a warm welcome to Clare James of the Wales Audit Office, Randal Hemingway, Section 151 Officer Representative and both Helen Pugh and Caroline Powell, Internal Auditors of Carmarthenshire County Council.

The Deputy Chief Fire Officer (DCFO) provided an overview of a recent incident at the Tata Steelworks, Port Talbot, and informed Members that an investigation was underway by the Health and Safety Executive.

The Chair reminded Members that training on the Statement of Accounts would be provided to all Members on conclusion of the meeting, followed by the Corporate Budget Planning event later that afternoon.

Cllr R Lewis drew Committee's attention to an incident discussed at the previous Resource Management Committee meeting which involved the tragic death of an individual in the Gower area, following a 5-hour delay from the original emergency call to the arrival of an Ambulance. Cllr R Lewis reiterated the view that the affected family had been badly let down by the Welsh Ambulance Service Trust (WAST) and stated that he did not consider their services to be fit for purpose. In this regard, Cllr R Lewis expressed his disappointment that Reynoldston Fire Station were not mobilised to attend this, and indeed other medical response incidents, despite the significant fundraising efforts undertaken by the local community to purchase a co-responder vehicle. The DCFO thanked Councillor Lewis for his comments and explained that a response had been issued to the Resource Management Committee Members in this regard which provided details of the mobilisation of the co-responder to the incident. The DCFO further clarified the clinical governance arrangements in place with WAST in terms of the services that the Fire and Rescue Service was trained and insured to provide as part of the co-responder initiative. A discussion ensued on the co-responder initiative and it was suggested by Cllr R Rees-Evans that an invitation could be extended to WAST to discuss the clinical governance arrangements in place in respect of the co-responder initiative. Furthermore, it was suggested by several Members that in the light of the Fire Service being agents of WAST, and therefore having no jurisdiction over their mobilisation protocols, it would be more appropriate for Cllr R Lewis to pursue this particular

case further with the relevant Assembly Member. These comments were supported by Cllr A Llewelyn, who suggested that the Authority's concerns should be formally expressed to WAST in respect of the incident referred to by Cllr R Lewis, and that to facilitate this, further information could be sought in this regard. The Chair suggested that Cllr Llewelyn could raise the issue at a future meeting of the Fire Authority. This was agreed.

4 TO CONFIRM AND SIGN AS A TRUE RECORD THE MINUTES OF THE PERFORMANCE AUDIT AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE HELD ON 28 JANUARY 2019

The minutes of the Performance, Audit and Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 28 January 2019 were confirmed as a true record of proceedings.

Matters Arising

Page 4, Paragraph 1: In response to a query from Cllr G Walker, the DCFO clarified that any faults identified as part of the evaluation trials for the compact appliance would be addressed prior to the purchase of any vehicles, and in this instance had been reported to the manufacturer.

5 TO RECEIVE AND APPROVE THE ANNUAL AUDIT LETTER – MID AND WEST WALES FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY 2017-18

The External Auditor (WAO) presented Committee with the Annual Audit Letter 2017-18 on behalf of the Appointed Auditor in line with the statutory responsibilities under the Public Audit (Wales) Act 2004 and the Code of Audit Practice. It was reported that the Authority had complied with its responsibilities relating to financial reporting and use of resources. Furthermore, Committee were informed that the Appointed Auditor was satisfied that the Authority had appropriate arrangements in place to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness in the use of its resources.

Councillor R Rees-Evans commended the letter which he considered was testament to the significant and positive work undertaken by the Service in this regard. These sentiments were echoed by Cllrs T Van-Rees and C Anderson.

RESOLUTION

It was RESOLVED that the report be noted.

6 TO RECEIVE AND NOTE THE 2019 AUDIT PLAN – MID AND WEST WALES FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY

The External Auditor (WAO) presented the Wales Audit Office 2019 Audit Plan to Members as set out at Appendix 1 of the report. Members gave consideration to the financial and performance audit work required over the coming year in order to meet the requirements of auditing standards and proper audit practices. It was reported that the performance audit fee for 2019 was estimated at £15,309 whereas the estimated fee for the audit of accounts was £54,000.

It was explained to Members that the marked improvement in the quality of the Authority's financial statements, combined with the economies of scale obtained by the WAO in auditing two years in quick succession had resulted in a 20% reduction for the estimated 2018 fee compared with the actual 2017 fee. Committee acknowledged that the 2018 level of fee was not likely to be sustained as the external auditors would revert to the auditing of one set of financial statements per annum; however, Members were pleased to note an estimated 10% reduction from the 2017 fees and were assured that any further efficiencies would be passed on the Authority.

In response to a query raised by Cllr C Anderson regarding misstatements, the External Auditor (WAO) explained the level of materiality applied across the audit process.

RESOLUTION

It was RESOLVED that the 2019 Audit Plan be noted.

7 TO RECEIVE AND NOTE THE INTERNAL AUDIT REPORT ON MAIN ACCOUNTING AND PAYROLL SYSTEM 2018/19

The Internal Auditor provided Committee with an outline of findings arising from the completed reviews for 2018/19 relating to the Main Accounting Review and the Payroll Review set out at Appendices 1 and 2 of the report. Committee was pleased to note the positive contents of both reviews, and consideration was given to the respective Action Plans which had been implemented where appropriate, and which summarised the issues identified, together with the recommendations made. The Committee was assured that all recommendations had been classified as minor issues, or areas in which to strengthen existing procedures, all of which had been agreed by the Executive Leadership Team and were being addressed by the Service by way of an Action Plan.

An update was also provided regarding the progress made with the final Internal Audit Report for 2018/19 as set out at Appendix 3 of the report whereby Members were informed that since the publication of the report, a total of 7 audits had been completed and that these would be presented to the Committee at its next meeting.

RESOLUTION

It was RESOLVED that the report be noted.

8 TO RECEIVE AND NOTE THE PERFORMANCE AND IMPROVEMENT PROGRESS REPORT – QUARTER 4 2018/19

The DCFO presented the Performance and Improvement Progress Report for the 2018/19 reporting period in respect of the number of fire incidents attended, hoax calls received, false alarms, road traffic collisions, flooding, medical response and fire deaths and injuries, as set out at Appendix 1 (Part 1) to the report.

Officers addressed a number of Member queries, as follows:

Cllr G Breeze drew attention to the number of deliberate fires attended by the Service during 2018/19 which had seen an increase of 15.9% compared with the 2017/18 reporting period. The DCFO explained that a determination would be made by the Officer in Charge, based upon the information available, as to the likely cause of a fire. In response to a request made by Cllr G Breeze, the DCFO agreed to provide Committee with comparable figures with North and South Wales Fire and Rescue Services in respect of the number of deliberate fires attended. Area Manager Harries provided Committee with an overview of the Joint Arson Group and the Strategic Arson Reduction Board which provided a collective approach from a wide range of agencies to promote greater ownership and partnership working in order to address the range of factors that could impact upon deliberate fires. Members were asked to note the array of preventative initiatives undertaken to deliver appropriate, targeted and effective interventions to mitigate deliberate fire setting across Wales.

A discussion ensued on the issue of land management practices and the consequential impact on the number and scale of grass and wildfires. Members acknowledged the environmental impact and the resources utilised by the Service in this regard and the requirement for a balance to be struck between biodiversity and land management requirements, codes of practice and governing legislation.

Cllr J Warman raised concerns regarding the risk of wildfire associated with sky lanterns. Area Manager Harries confirmed that the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) was working towards the introduction of more rigid standards for the sale of sky lanterns through regulatory organisations. Members were further assured that the Service monitored such incidents to identify trends and areas of concerns.

In response to a query from Cllr T Hennegan, Area Manager Harries confirmed that data was captured in respect of the category of occupancy at properties of the incidents attended by the Service and that information would be referred to a relevant agency in line with data sharing protocols where appropriate.

In response to comments made by Cllr T Hennegan regarding the Welsh Equality Housing Standards, Area Manager Harries agreed that significant improvements to fire safety had been made within housing associations, and he reported that recent legislation relating to the safe habitats of occupants within public properties was aimed at making landlords more accountable in ensuring adequate fire safety standards within properties.

Cllr T Van-Rees requested statistics on the number of successful prosecutions related to deliberate fire setting. Area Manager Harries agreed to provide any available statistics and assured Members that the three Fire and Rescue Services in Wales liaised closely with the Police Forces to provide evidence where available in order to ensure that the right investigation channels were undertaken in order to bring perpetrators to justice, and also to monitor the number of convictions achieved.

Members' attention was drawn to Part 2 of Appendix 1 of the report, whereby the DCFO provided Committee with a synopsis of progress made against 12 improvement objectives. Members were pleased to note that progress had been made within the majority of improvement objectives, 9 of which had been allocated green status, 2 amber status and 1 red status. Members' queries on this issue were addressed as follows:

Cllr J Warman referred to Objective 1 which related to holistic home safety intervention and emphasised the importance of the Service in continuing its positive preventative work and he stressed that Government should provide additional funding to enable the Service to pursue the imperative of community safety work. Area Manager Harries provided a synopsis of the funding received by the Welsh Government to maintain the Service's home fire safety interventions which had been subject to successful grant funding applications made on an annual basis. Cllr R Rees-Evans commented that the Welsh Government had previously reduced a significant amount of grant funding, however the Authority had raised the enough money through its own funds to ensure that the Service's community safety initiatives could be maintained.

Members' attention was drawn to the Emergency Services Network (ESN) objective 5 which would provide an innovative and unique solution to the provision of emergency service communications in the United Kingdom. It was explained to Members that work was ongoing, however the project had incurred significant delays and over-expenditure to date. In response to a query from Cllr R Rees-Evans in relation to the renewal of equipment, the ACFO explained that the hardware was fit for purpose until 2022 at the least and that new mobile data equipment was being rolled out in the next 6 months which had been part-funded by Welsh Government.

Committee Members were provided with a synopsis of the progress made against the Service's corporate projects for the Northern Area Development Site, Integrated Software Platform and Structural Personal Protective Equipment, as set out in Part 3 of Appendix 1 of the report.

In response to comments made by Cllr K Curry in relation to the Northern Area Development, the DCFO reported that the Service had exhausted all possible partnership working opportunities, and agreed that it was unfortunate that there were no feasible joint initiatives to be pursued without further delaying the project.

Cllr T Van-Rees enquired which agency / person was responsible for maintaining firebreaks. Area Manager Harries confirmed that profiling of data was utilised within the Service to identify the suitability of locations for firebreaks and the Service duly attempted to influence landowners accordingly. It was also commented that additional work was required in terms of a sustainable farming community approach with intervention by way of land grazing and self-sustaining land.

RESOLUTION

It was RESOLVED that the report and progress made to date be noted.

9 TO RECEIVE AND NOTE THE BUSINESS RISK REGISTER UPDATE REPORT TO MARCH 2019

The ACFO presented the Business Risk Update Report to March 2019 to the Committee.

Members were referred to the Business Risk Register Overview set out at Appendix A, Risk Assessment Matrix for Risk Register at Appendix B, the Business Risk Register Decision Log set out at Appendix C and the six identified risks set out therein.

A summary of the latest considerations by the Business Risk Management Group (BRMG) for each of the risks contained within the Business Risk Register Decision Log was given to Members. It was noted that the 6 areas relating to Regulatory Body Compliance, Industrial Relations, Change/Risk Management, Attendance Management, Security and BREXIT had been categorised as medium risk. Members discussed and acknowledged the issues emanating from each risk as set out in the report.

RESOLUTION

It was RESOLVED that the Performance, Audit and Scrutiny Committee note the report and acknowledge the ongoing progress to both identify and manage matters of business risk affecting the Service.

- 10 TO CONSIDER ANY OTHER ITEM 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.

The meeting closed at 11:30.