

**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 RESOURCE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE AT ITS NEXT MEETING**

**CYFARFOD O'R PWYLLGOR RHEOLI ADNODDAU
MEETING OF THE RESOURCE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE**

DYDD LLUN, 26 TACHWEDD 2012

MONDAY, 26 NOVEMBER 2012

**PENCADLYS Y GWASANAETH TÂN AC ACHUB
HEOL LLWYN PISGWYDD, CAERFYRDDIN
FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE HEADQUARTERS,
LIME GROVE AVENUE, CARMARTHEN**

11.00 – 13.05

100% PRESENOLDEB/ATTENDANCE

Presennol yn y Cyfarfod/Present at Meeting:

CADEIRYDD/CHAIRPERSON:

A Lewis

IS-GADEIRYDD/VICE CHAIRPERSON:

W Evans

AELODAU/MEMBERS:

**Cyng/Cllrs: K Curry, J Curtice, J Dudley, C
Higgins, R Llewellyn, C Lloyd, K Pearson,
R Rees-Evans, T J Richards, G Thomas,
E Williams, A Woolcock**

YMDDIHEURIADAU/APOLOGIES:

YN BRESENNOL /IN ATTENDANCE:

**R Smith, P Bates, D Daycock, D Masson,
E Aitken, C Davies, J Maunder, K Jones,**

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

No apologies for absence were tendered.

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 ANNOUNCEMENT'S/PERSONAL MATTERS

The Chair clarified that the Resource Management Committee had not been held at the Earlswood training facility, as previously scheduled, due to the fact that a Members' Briefing Session had subsequently been arranged for all Members following the meeting at Service Headquarters, Carmarthen. It was agreed that a visit to Earlswood to view the training facility and participate in various training demonstrations would be arranged for Members at a later date.

Committee were informed that Councillor C Crowley was recovering from a recent stay in hospital and Members wished him a speedy recovery to good health.

4 TO CONFIRM AS A CORRECT RECORD THE MINUTES OF THE RESOURCE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE HELD ON 16 JULY 2012

The minutes of the meeting held on 16 July 2012 were received and confirmed as a true record of the proceedings.

5 TO RECEIVE THE BUDGET MONITORING REPORT FOR THE FINANCIAL YEAR 2012/13

The Director of Resources introduced the budget monitoring report which compared the estimated revenue and capital net expenditure for the six months ended 30 September 2012 and the year ended 31 March 2013 and compared those estimated positions with the 2012/13 working budget. Attention was drawn to the revenue budget monitoring set out in appendix 1 of the report, whereby Committee were informed that there was a current under spend of £195k which represented 0.9% of the profiled budget estimated at 31 May 2012. The underspend could, in the main, be attributed to recruitment costs and recruits courses. On that basis the estimated expenditure for the year forecasted an underspend of £322k (0.74%) of the profiled budget.

Committee considered the capital monitoring for the period 1st April 2012 – 31 March 2013 set out in appendix 2 of the report which summarised the expenditure on capital projects to 31 March 2013 and compared the results against the Approved Capital Programme. The Director of Resources confirmed that capital financing was within the limits set by the prudential indicators.

RESOLUTION

It was RESOLVED:

That the Resource Management Committee note the report.

6 TO RECEIVE THE JOINT REPORT OF THE CHIEF FIRE OFFICER AND DIRECTOR OF RESOURCES ON THE BUDGET MONITORING REQUIREMENT FOR THE FINANCIAL YEAR 2013/14

The Chief Fire Officer reported that the Authority had continued to make excellent progress against its stated objectives and was maintaining a high performing and cost effective service, providing Council Tax payers with demonstrable value for money.

Significant progress had been made in implementing key actions in 2012/2013 with improvements throughout the year being reported periodically to the Fire Authority and relevant committees. Members were provided with an overview of the areas of progress made surrounding the Authority's objectives as set out in the 2012/13 Annual Improvement Plan.

Committee was reminded that as part of the Service's external scrutiny and review processes, the Wales Audit Office (WAO) had produced an Improvement Assessment letter in October 2012, stating that the organisation was likely to comply with the requirement to make arrangements to secure continuous improvement during the current financial year. Furthermore, the WAO had reiterated its findings in the Annual Improvement Report by reaffirming that the Authority had a sound approach to financial management, and that the Authority's leadership continued to drive change through the effective management of its financial challenges. The Chief Fire Officer emphasised the requirement to continue to explore opportunities for further efficiency savings, over and above those already identified. Committee were advised that part of that work would be achieved via the National Issues Committee which had been introduced to consider the potential for efficiency savings and collaboration across the three Welsh Fire and Rescue Services, as well as with the wider public and voluntary sectors.

Committee was reminded that the Authority had recently agreed its Draft Improvement Plan for 2013/14 which was currently undergoing wide consultation, and had been developed in line with the five year Strategic Plan 2010-2015. The 2013/14 Draft Improvement Plan was designed to continue to drive service improvement whilst delivering value for money, focusing on the areas of managing risk, managing people, working together, managing resources and managing performance.

The Chief Fire Officer emphasised the importance of continuing to introduce planned budget reductions in line with the Authority's medium term financial strategy, ensuring that reductions would have a minimal impact on the Service's ability to provide an excellent service to the communities of Mid and West Wales.

The Director of Resources made reference to the 2010 Service Review Programme which had undertaken a comprehensive review of service delivery in order to identify a range of potential efficiencies in preparation of the Government spending plans for the years 2011/12 – 2014/15. The extent of savings required meant that the Fire Authority had to consider more efficient methods of service delivery. All staff were consulted and had many opportunities to contribute their ideas and views. The change of staff rostering at Llanelli Fire Station would provide the bulk of the savings required in 2013/14, although a combination of reviewing station activities and a reduction in supplies and services would also make a significant contribution.

Members were aware that the work undertaken by the Authority to reduce costs over recent years had put the organisation in a position of strength with regard to its budget setting exercise for 2013/14.

It was confirmed that the level of potential savings for 2013/14 were in line with the Welsh Government's Comprehensive Spending Review and Committee were presented with a report detailing the potential areas for budget reductions as well as the general budget requirement for 2013/14 for Members' consideration.

The budget being put forward for consideration attempted to balance the operational requirements and priorities of the Authority with the need to play a part in the context of the economic environment and the Constituent Authorities' settlements.

Committee were informed that the average Constituent Authority increase in Aggregate External Finance for 2013/14 was 1.17%. The Chief Fire Officer and Treasurer / Director of Resources had in previous years met with a mix of Constituent Authority Chief Executives and Treasurers in order to establish views and understand organisational pressures. These meetings had in general expressed a desire that the Fire Authority's budget increase reflected the Constituent Authorities' settlements.

Members were further reminded that in 2011/12 the Fire Authority reduced the contributions of the Constituent Authorities by £1million as a one-off gesture, as budget savings were made earlier than anticipated. Many of the Constituent Authorities had indicated their intention to utilise the monies to reduce their Fire Authority budget contributions over the next few years.

In agreement with the Constituent Authority Treasurers, the cash call on the revenue account of Constituent Authorities in 2012/13 was significantly reduced by a contribution (£380k) from the Authority's Reserves. This was a reduction on the call on the reserve in the previous year and Members were informed that the Authority intended to gradually reduce the call on this reserve over the next few years. Accordingly it was proposed that the 2013/14 budget be supported by £280k from reserves, a reduction of £100k. The effect of reducing the reliance on reserves was to add 0.2% to the Authority's real like for like budget increase.

The Director of Resources reported that there continued to be concerns regarding backdated costs as a result of the court case that gave equal status to on call employees in terms of pension arrangements. The Department for Communities and Local Government had considered options but the outcome was still not known therefore it was not clear what percentage of backdated contributions/pensions payments the Authority would be expected to cover. It was also impossible to know how many on-call staff would decide to take up the option of backdating their contributions. These costs were therefore not included within the budget exercise, however £500,000 of reserves had been set aside as a precaution.

Committee were informed that in general, any grants and associated expenditure that had not been absolutely confirmed at the time of writing had been excluded from the budget, however most of those grants would be funding additional expenditure at 100% and would therefore have a net nil effect on the budget requirement. It was noted that some Community Safety grants had however been assumed to continue over the 3 years, as the draft Welsh Government budget showed grants for Community Safety work with a small reduction in year 3.

Committee were informed that the Authority had not estimated for the £300,000 2012 pay awards (1% for firefighters pay award, nil for all other staff) however the budget had now been validated.

It was reported that the establishment of a longer term vehicle replacement programme would be developed according to the result of the Transport review and subsequent Transport Strategy. Figures had been included for 2013/14 on current information, with an estimate included for 2014/15 and 2015/16 based on the costs of vehicles being replaced. A more detailed Transport replacement programme would be put forward for Members' information at a later date.

The Director of Resources concluded that £536,000 of efficiencies resulted in a budget figure recommended for approval of £43,876,059, representing an increase of 0.93% on a like for like basis.

It was recommended that £280k of the above approved budget would be funded from reserves, therefore the amount falling on the constituent authorities would amount to £43,596,059 a 1.17% increase on a cash basis.

RESOLUTION

It was RESOLVED:

That the Resource Management Committee recommended to the Fire and Rescue Authority the following for approval:-

- 1) *That for 2013/14, the net budget at £43,876,059 (0.93% increase like for like) be approved (Appendix A).*
- 2) *That the budget of £43,876,059 for 2013/14 be part funded by £280k from reserves.*

- 3) *That the Constituent Authorities be requested for the balance of £43,596,059 as their contribution for the 2013/14 year (1.17% cash increase).*
- 4) *That the Capital Programme attached at Appendix B be approved, leading to the capital financing charges shown as additional in Appendix A.*
- 5) *That members approve the vehicle replacement programme attached at Appendix D.*
- 6) *Whilst it had been assumed that the majority of vehicles would be leased in the budget build up, it was recommended that the Director of Resources be authorised to decide on the appropriate method of financing of vehicles (be it leasing or otherwise) at the time of procurement.*

7 TO RECEIVE THE HEALTH AND SAFETY PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT UPDATE

The Director of Risk presented Committee with the Health and Safety Performance Management Update for the reporting period 1 April 2012 to 31 October 2012. A total of 45 On Duty Injuries had been recorded, 2 of which were major injuries relating to a jammed finger and knee injury. This compared favourably against the 61 recorded injuries during the same period in 2011. The Director of Risk explained that the reported injuries could mainly be attributed to slips, trips or falls, and handling, lifting and carrying.

Members were assured that the personal safety of Firefighters was closely monitored and in particular the Service operated a zero tolerance policy on firefighter attacks. During the period 01.04.12 – 31.10.12 there were 4 reported verbal attacks on Firefighters which the Service would continue to closely monitor to ensure that such figures remained low.

Committee were informed that a robust health and safety inspection regime was in place which had identified a slight reduction in housekeeping standards during recent unannounced audits, in comparison to the forewarned visits. All audit reports would continue to be circulated to respective Heads of Command / Department to ensure that remedial actions were addressed. Appropriate control measures were also in place to take account of asbestos regulations and legionella monitoring requirements.

Reference was made to a proposed no smoking policy on Service premises and Committee were informed that all implications would be taken into account following the consultation period.

Committee were pleased to note that the Service was progressing well towards achieving the Gold Corporate Health Award and it was anticipated that a submission would be made in early 2013.

Reference was made to the proposed Health and Safety (Fees) Regulations 2012 which would place a duty on the HSE to recover its costs for carrying out its statutory function from those found to be in material breach of health and safety law. Members noted that the proposed fee for intervention hourly rate for 2012/13 was £124.

The Director of Risk informed the Committee that there had been 77 reported vehicle accidents for the period 01.04.2012 – 31.10.12, compared with 101 in the same period during the previous business year, thus demonstrating a steady decline in the number of incidents. Members raised concerns regarding emergency services' response rates to incidents in light of the general increase in traffic congestion and the potential confusion from motorists in how to react to emergency services' vehicles operating its blue lights. The Director of Risk confirmed that some advice was provided within the Highway Code, however public reaction continued to be the most significant risk when responding to incidents. Members were assured that Emergency Fire Appliance Drivers (EFADs) were highly trained to take into account the actions of other road users; furthermore the Service would continue to lobby driver training centres and road safety officers in order to raise public awareness.

RESOLUTION

It was RESOLVED:

That Members note the report and acknowledge the ongoing progress to improve health and safety performance within the Service.

8 TO RECEIVE A REPORT ON HEALTH AND WELLBEING

The Corporate Head of People and Organisational Development introduced the quarterly report on health and wellbeing which centred upon sickness absence performance in line with the Welsh Government's aim of enabling people to be healthy citizens.

Reference was made to appendix 1 of the report which showed that the current overall average sickness absence figure for the Service for the period 1 April 2012 – 31 October 2012 was 4.28 shifts lost. The projected end of year absence figure amounted to 7.33 shifts lost, which was outside the organisation's target of 5.29 shifts lost.

Members queried the level of joint working with other organisations such as Dyfed Powys Police in order to adopt best practice methodologies to improve sickness and absence figures. The Corporate Head of People and Organisational Development reported that the Service's sickness figures were on par with both North and South Wales Fire and Rescue Services and explained that a number of intervention strategies had been implemented to reduce absence figures; these comprised of home visits, job share reduced hours etc.

The Chief Fire Officer further confirmed that the Service compared its sickness figures across a whole range of organisations across the UK and assured Committee that the Service was in general performing well in this area, and had in the past been recognised as an exemplar organisation for its performance.

Committee were provided with an overview of both long and short term sickness within the Service during 01.04.12 – 31.10.12 and consideration was also given to the five year retirement profile within the Service whereby it was noted that only 1 ill-health retirement had occurred during the current business year. Members acknowledged the significantly improvements made by the Service in the area of ill-health retirements over a 12 year period and it was explained that this could be attributed, in some part, to effective health and wellbeing policies, including training and assessments, together with early intervention via accident investigation and referral for Occupational Health services.

Following a query from Members the Corporate Head of People and Organisational Development reported that the improved performance in sickness absence during the last quarter of 2011/12 could, in part, be attributed to a robust support infrastructure with timely home visits to assist individuals in returning to full health as soon as possible.

Committee were delighted to note that the Service had been successful in achieving the Silver Award within the Welsh Government's Corporate Health Standard and that work was ongoing to achieve Gold Standard during the next year. Members were therefore reassured that the Service had in place a wide range of policies and procedures available to employees to assist their work/life balance and to maximise their skills such as flexible working, job share, skills pathways, cycle to work scheme, Anti-smoking Policy, Drug and Alcohol Policy, Stress Awareness Policy etc.

RESOLUTION

It was RESOLVED:

That Members note the report on Health and Wellbeing.

9 TO RECEIVE THE CORPORATE COMMUNICATION AND CONSULTATION STRATEGY ANNUAL REPORT 2011/2012

The Head of Corporate Communication and Democratic Services reported that the Corporate Communications and Consultation Strategy for 2011-2015 had been introduced to support the Authority's five year strategic plan. The strategy was supported by an Annual Improvement Plan and an annual report on progress against the first year's action plan was presented to Members for consideration.

Committee gave consideration to the summary of progress against the objectives set for 2011/12 and noted the following achievements:

- Revised Fire Authority report template comprising a communication and consultation section;
- Creation of a new modernised version of the weekly circular;
- Launch of a new website in July 2012;
- Streamlined service delivery reports;
- Fulfilment of requirements under the Civil Contingencies Act to 'warn and inform' the public before, during and after emergencies;
- Delivery of Community Safety campaigns to contribute to a reduction in fire deaths and injuries.

Following a query from Members the Corporate Head of People and Organisational Development confirmed that the Service had undertaken a cultural audit approximately four years ago as a means of gaining the views of employees. The survey was undertaken in line with the CFOA best practice toolkit and the results were collated and analysed using an external independent host. The Chief Fire Officer reported that the Service gave regular consideration to undertaking employee engagement surveys, the decisions of which were based upon balancing costs with benefits.

RESOLUTION

It was RESOLVED:

That Members note the report.

10 TO RECEIVE A REPORT ON THE NATIONAL PROCUREMENT SERVICE (NPS)

The Director of Resources introduced a report on the National Procurement Service (NPS), which was the outcome of a Welsh Government commissioned review of procurement in the Welsh Public Sector. It was reported that the NPS would provide the Welsh Public Sector with a strategic vehicle for the procurement of common categories of goods and services purchased by multiple sectors each year such as stationery, office furniture, travel, IT hardware and software, mail services etc. Committee were informed that these were not necessarily high value or complex, but they represented 23% of public sector spend.

Committee gave consideration to the NPS invitation letter set out in appendix 1 of the report which all Fire and Rescue Authorities and other public bodies in Wales had been asked to enter the by 14th December 2012, however an extension had been provided to the 17th December 2012 which would allow each Fire Authority in Wales to consider the recommendations at their respective meetings.

It was clarified that the NPS would focus on developing common specifications, tendering and contract management and would also seek to leverage the procurement scale of the Welsh Public Sector whilst having a positive impact on the Welsh economy including Small Medium Enterprises (SMEs).

Committee were informed that the Fire and Rescue sector had specialist contracts already in place for certain commodities which could be placed in the common and repetitive spend category. Examples of such categories included clothing and uniform and light vehicles, all of which provided exceptional value and was unlikely to be improved upon, therefore these would be noted as caveats in the proposed response to the NPS.

Whist Members recognised the potential benefits in terms of value for money, sustainability concerns were raised regarding the potential for economies of scale to hinder local sourcing of goods and services. The Director of Resources assured Committee that the NPS created an opportunity to improve links with economic development activity and strengthen Welsh supply chains in those areas. Reference was also made to appendix 1 of the report which noted the findings of the McClelland Review which concluded that stronger centralised procurement, with a focus on economic value, resulted in a greater level of local spend than with uncontrolled maverick buying. Members were also assured that the local sourcing of goods and services was a key consideration for the Minister and that tendering documentation would be discussed with sector representatives and be packaged such that small and local businesses were not disadvantaged where relevant.

Councillor A S Lewis moved an amendment to the report which added to the recommendation the following: ***That the Resource Management Committee recommend to the Fire Authority the signing up to the National Procurement Service, with the caveats outlined in the letter and report presented to Members.***

The amendment, being put, was unanimously carried, and added to the substantive motion.

RESOLUTION

It was RESOLVED:

That the Resource Management Committee recommend to the Fire Authority the signing up to the National Procurement Service, with the caveats outlined in the letter and report presented to Members.

11 TO RECEIVE THE TRAINING DELIVERY UPDATE REPORT

The Corporate Head of People and Organisational Development reported that the Service's Training Delivery section had undertaken a wide range of training and competency assessments during the past year. It was reported that the Training Delivery Department had contributed to significantly reducing Corporate Risk by the undertaking of training delivery in a significant number of areas, the following being of particular interest:

- Providing sufficient courses which had consequently reduced the overall skills gap across the Risk Critical Range to 11% with a target of a reduction to 5% by the end of 2012/13. The current skills gaps was due, in part, to the volume of training undertaken in 2010. Significant progress had been made over the last 24 months to reduce the skills gap whereby the Service had introduced a flexible approach to provide necessary training to on-call staff whilst working in partnership with North Wales Fire and Rescue Service to share resources.
- Focus of Breathing Apparatus (BA) skills gaps and course nomination which had reduced the skills gap to 124 wearers which represented a 78% improvement since January 2010.
- Incident Command System (ICS) reassessments had been developed and rolled out across the Service, resulting in a current skills gap of 58. The Service used the state-of-the-art software technology within the new Hydra / Minerva facility at Service Headquarters to deliver local training programmes.
- Members were pleased to note that the Service had been instrumental in the implementation of the Intermediate Emergency Care (IEC) course through close collaboration with the Welsh Ambulance Service Trust and both North and South Wales Fire and Rescue Services. Further collaboration with the Ambulance Service had focused on improved training for co-responder crews and aligning that approach to the delivery of the IEC training.
- The Service had explored new opportunities of generating income and attract new custom from TATA steel and Blue Mountain amongst others.

The Corporate Head of People and Organisational Development emphasised the Service's commitment to providing the best levels of support and assessment to employees, particularly during probationary and/or development periods. It was pleasing to note, therefore, that the People Development Department had been recognised for its outstanding achievements by winning the prestigious National Training Award under the "Large Employer" category. Members would also be kept updated of the outcome from the UK Training award finals in due course.

Committee were interested to note that a newly developed Crew Manager Booklet had enabled employees to demonstrate competence via a “task led” development process for newly promoted employees. Such an innovative approach had been well received by newly promoted Crew Managers and had saved almost £20,000 in training fees for the organisation.

Committee commended the People and Organisational Development department for its sterling progress in reducing the level of skills gaps and commitment to firefighter safety which had culminated in a much deserved award.

RESOLUTION

It was RESOLVED:

That Committee note the work undertaken by the P&OD Department in relation to Risk Critical Training.

12 TO RECEIVE A REPORT ON ON-CALL FIREFIGHTER RECRUITMENT

The Corporate Head of People and Organisational Development reported that there were approximately 1,578 On-Call Firefighter 24 hour units in Wales, 713 of which existed across the Service. Committee were informed that vacancies existed at a number of on-call fire stations throughout the Service area, which was reflective of employee turnover and the need to replace people who had left the Service for a variety of reasons, the most common being a change in full time employment. On-Call Firefighter recruitment was therefore a continuous rolling programme facilitated by the Human Resources Department at Service Headquarters.

Members acknowledged that matching the number of new recruits to the number of leavers was not without challenge, particularly given the lead time to recruit and train new On-Call Firefighters who often had to balance assessment / training time with the demands of their full time jobs.

During 2012 the Human Resources Department had administered 51 test sessions, processing 454 candidates with a success rate of approximately 60%. Furthermore, a total of 294 candidates were currently within the recruitment process throughout the Service area.

The Corporate Head of People and Organisational Development Department reported that during 2012 the Service had continued to encourage a greater number of On-Call Firefighter applications, and to raise the awareness of local employers to the benefits they could gain by releasing their employees to become on-call firefighters at local fire stations.

It was clarified that the type of availability an applicant could provide, i.e. day or night, and respective times during any 24 hour period, would have a clear influence on whether or not they could be employed at that particular time as the availability they could provide would need to be considered within the context of the overall crewing arrangements at the local fire station.

Committee were further informed that the current Grey book conditions of service which offered 100% or 75% contracts were too restrictive in terms of the availability of on-call employees. A Task and Finish group had therefore been set up in order to review alternative remuneration methods as a means of enhancing flexibility to attract a wider pool of candidates. It was disappointing to note, however, that one Trade Union had not, to date, been prepared to explore the feasibility of localised pay bargaining. The Chief Fire Officer reported that he would be attending the NJC review of Pay and Conditions - Combined Employers Side Advisory Forum workshop on 27 November 2012 in his capacity as Chief Advisor and would raise concerns regarding the current restrictive practices.

Reference was made to the Service's wider recruitment strategy comprising target marketing initiatives via the promulgation of press releases, posters and leaflets. Attraction events were also extremely important for the Service to ensure a suitable pool of candidates to meet current and future needs. Such events and awareness days continued to be held at local stations throughout the Service area involving all key stakeholder departments to engage with as many people within the community as possible, and encourage them to join the Service.

Committee were pleased to report that during 2012 to date, the Service had appointed 60 On-Call Firefighter recruits, and a further 20 recruits were scheduled to commence induction training during December 2012.

RESOLUTION

It was RESOLVED:

That Committee noted the update on on-call firefighter recruitment and selection

- 13 Any other items of business that by reason of special circumstance, the Chair decides should be considered as a matter of urgency, pursuant to Section 100B(4)(b) of the Local Government Act 1972.**

Councillor C Lloyd put forth the following item of urgent business:

Rural Response Pumps – concerns over the deployment in Swansea, press articles issued by the Chief in support, and subsequent press release regarding faults on the vehicles.

The Chair concluded that the item put forth for consideration by Cllr C Lloyd had been incorporated into the Members' Briefing scheduled for 13:00 on 26th November 2012 and would therefore not be considered as part of the Resource Management Committee's item of business.

The meeting closed at 13:05.