

**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, REVIEW AND AUDIT COMMITTEE AT ITS NEXT MEETING ON
25th January 2010

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

**DYDD LLUN, 30 TACHWEDD 2009
MONDAY, 30 NOVEMBER 2009**

**PENCADLYS Y GWASANAETH TÂN
HEOL LLWYN PISGWYDD, CAERFYRDDIN**

**FIRE SERVICE HEADQUARTERS,
LIME GROVE AVENUE, CARMARTHEN**

11.00AM – 12.45PM

80% PRESENOLDEB/ATTENDANCE

Presennol yn y Cyfarfod/Present at Meeting:

IS-GADEIRYDD/VICE CHAIRMAN: P James

IS-GADEIRYDD/VICE CHAIRMAN: J Dudley

AELODAU/MEMBERS: Cyng/Cllrs: JJJ Davies, P Llewellyn, C
Philpott,

YMDDIHEURIADAU/APOLOGIES T Tudor, B Hynes, J Holmes, R Lewis, E
Kirchner

YN BRESENNOL /IN ATTENDANCE: A Howells, R Smith, P Coleman, D
Masson, D Swan, S Flather, B Bassett, R
Davies, H Thomas, M Thomas, G Lloyd,
J West, R Powell

1. DECLARATION BY MEMBERS OF ANY PERSONAL INTEREST

None were declared.

2 CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS / PERSONAL MATTERS

The Chair welcomed Area Manager D Masson, Head of Strategic Planning and Performance to his first Committee Meeting since his appointment in November 2009.

3 TO RECEIVE AND CONSIDER THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 12th OCTOBER 2009

The minutes of the meeting held on 12th October 2009 were received and approved as a true record.

Matters Arising from the Minutes of the PRAC Meeting held on 12th October 2009

The Chair made reference to Item 3, paragraph 6 of the minutes relating to the forward work plan for scrutiny. It had been brought to his attention that given that an extensive external review of the Control facility had already been undertaken, with regular updates reported to the People and Organisational Development Committee, it was suggested that Committee may wish to focus on an alternative area to scrutinize. Members therefore agreed to withdraw the Control Facility from the Task & Finish Scrutiny forward work plan.

Councillor C Philpott reported that the visit to Control attended on 23rd November 2009 had been a valuable and interesting experience. She took the opportunity to commend Control Room Staff for their commitment and hard work and encouraged all Members to attend the visit arranged for 14th December 2009.

Councillor J Dudley highlighted item 3, paragraph 8 of the minutes and requested an update for the 2009/10 events programme. Committee were duly informed that two visits to Service Control had been set and arrangements were in place for Members to visit the Earlswood training facility in the Spring of 2010.

The Head of Finance drew attention to item 9, paragraph 1 of the minutes relating to Local Government Audit and Inspection Fees for 2009/10. Members were pleased to note that the charge to be paid to KPMG would remain steady, with the possibility of a reduction in fees.

4 TO RECEIVE A REPORT ON PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT – PPDR AND SKILLS GAP OVERVIEW

The Deputy Chief Fire Officer provided Members with an overview of the current situation in relation to Personal and Professional Development Reviews (PPDR) and Skills Gaps, as requested by the Committee at its meeting on 20th July 2009.

It was reported that the completion of PPDRs across the whole Service currently averaged approximately 60%. Members were informed that some of the shortfall could be attributed to difficulties in rural commands in terms of the number of staff involved, together with time restrictions. It was pleasing to note, however, that Commands were indicating an improvement since the First Quarter of 2009/10, with the completion of

PPDRs highlighted as a focus area for their managers.

Members noted that the re-introduction of the Risk Critical Training Programme had facilitated more effective planning arrangements and therefore Commands were reporting progress against their targets for Critical Skills. Members acknowledged that issues around Service logistics and the capacity to deliver the required training continued to be a difficult area to address. Following concerns raised by Councillor C Philpott Members were assured that risk critical training had not at any time been removed from the Service. It was clarified that the Service had trialled an alternative method of processing training requirements, however this had proved unsuccessful and thus the scheduled programme had been re-introduced.

Reference was made to the recent Operational Assurance Process by the Peer Assessment Team. The report recommended a focus on the Training and Development aspects of the Service and highlighted areas for improvement in relation to the Service's Risk Critical Training and data capture. Committee discussed resource implications in terms of increasing the number of instructors to deliver training programmes and also allowing sufficient time for Retained personnel to undertake their weekly drill / training sessions.

Councillor C Philpott emphasised the need to address risk critical training as a matter of haste, which needed to be supported with adequate resources. It was noted that current budget restrictions could leave the Service vulnerable and open to risk in terms of training delivery.

Members were assured that although both PPDR and Skills Gaps were off target in some Commands and Departments, arrangements were, or soon to be, in place to address this matter including:

- Refinement of the PPDR process
- Reintroduction of the Risk Critical Training Programme, with an emphasis on Incident Command, Breathing Apparatus and Fire Behaviour Training
- Refinement and simplification of the training records database and performance management systems to provide less onerous inputting of information and improved accessibility to data for management purposes

RESOLUTION

It was RESOLVED that

Members note the report, in conjunction with the Performance Monitoring Report for April – September 2009.

5 TO RECEIVE A REPORT ON THE WELSH PERFORMANCE INDICATOR APRIL – SEPTEMBER 2009

Committee gave consideration to Quarter 2 performance information for 2009/10 in relation to the Wales Performance Indicators which formed part of the Service's Performance Management reporting methodology.

Station Manager Swan reported that this was the second year Services in Wales had been able to report on these new indicators. As agreed with Welsh Assembly Government, the Service had provided historical data to the Wales Data Unit who had calculated indicator values retrospectively for previous years in order to provide comparison data where possible.

It was reported that of the 14 indicators reported upon, 5 corporate health indicators had failed to reach their targets. Members acknowledged that extremely challenging targets had been set for the Corporate Health indicators, and the Service would continue to encourage applications from under-represented members of the community, however due to low staff turnover it would take time to improve these indicators.

Members drew attention to the percentage of female firefighters, which was currently off target. A particularly challenging target had been set, however the Service's performance was nearly 2% better than the Welsh average and showed an improvement on the 2008/09 figures.

With reference to the undisputed invoices paid in 30 days, Members were informed that the Service remained in the top third of Welsh local authorities. The Head of Finance explained that the updating of the Service's Agresso system would require members of staff to familiarise themselves with a different process for paying invoices and as such it was anticipated that a gradual improvement would be seen over the next 6-9 months.

Station Manager Swan drew attention to the Service Delivery Indicators whereby 12 indicators had failed to reach their targets. Members noted that it was extremely unfortunate to report 5 confirmed fire deaths in the first half of the year, however it was pleasing that a number of community safety activities had been initiated within these communities.

A discussion ensued on the number of HFSCs delivered within higher risk dwellings within the 5 minute and 10 minute standard. Station Manager Swan highlighted that the values reported were for six months, and whilst they were currently projected to be off target by the end of the year (approximately twice their current reported values), a significant proportion of HFSCs would be undertaken during the winter months. It was therefore acknowledged that an accurate assessment could only be made after Quarter 4 reporting was complete.

Station Manager Swan reported that the Smoke Alarm Actuation indicator was being closely monitored for trend analysis to ascertain whether the variance from previous year's performance was a reporting issue or actual non-operation of smoke alarms.

Following a query from Councillor C Philpott the Deputy Chief Fire Officer resolved to remove any duplication of data contained within the report in order to make the statistics more meaningful and user-friendly.

The Chair congratulated Officers in delivering such a favourable report given the challenging targets that had been set by the Service.

RESOLUTION

It was RESOLVED that

The report be noted.

6 TO RECEIVE A REPORT ON THE BUSINESS PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT REPORT APRIL – SEPTEMBER 2009

Station Manager Swan introduced the Business Performance Management Report April – September 2009, which reported on the second quarter performance for 2009/10. The report highlighted objectives in individual business plans that were currently off target. At the request of Members, the Report format had been changed to group by Directorate, with the aim of providing officers with accountability to ensure that all issues were being managed appropriately and effectively.

It was noted that all county commands had reviewed their acceptable skill gaps at the start of the year and had consequently increased the target; accordingly some Commands were showing off target for Effective and Empowered people. Members were assured that work was currently underway to refine the process of gathering and reporting skill gaps in order to improve the situation.

Members attention was drawn to the following areas:

Accidental Fire Deaths – Where Commands had received incidents in this category a number of community safety activities had been delivered, not only at the immediate incident scene but also in the locality to maximise the potential audience and generate as many Home Fire Safety Checks as possible. The Deputy Chief Fire Officer commended Officers for the excellent work undertaken to address the situation.

Smoke Alarm Ownership and Actuation – A combination of a change in the method of recording information via the new Incident Recording System and actual lack of ownership or tampering with devices to prevent their operation was of a particular concern for the Service. Processes were in place however to refine community safety messages and monitor recording procedures.

Members were provided with an overview of the objectives currently off target within each department / command and drew attention to the following areas:

Appliance Availability – a review of staff contractual commitments was currently underway across all commands in order to deal with establishment shortfalls.

Powys: Effective and Empowered People – Members were pleased to note an improvement in Personal Performance and Development Reviews (PPDRs) and that work was continuing to ensure 100% completion by the end of the full reporting period. The Chair reported that PPDRs had been highlighted in the scrutiny session held on 14th September 2009 and Commended Powys Command for all their hard work.

ICT: Firelink – It was noted that Phase B had again been deferred due to outstanding work relating to the resilience of the Airwave network in Wales, however, all Fire and Rescue Service preparatory works were complete.

CRR: Partnership Working – Commands had assessed each formalised partnership in order to ensure they remained fit for purpose and that all future partnerships would be created with the right people. The creation of partnerships, particularly to reach the most vulnerable, remained a focus area, but staff capacity issues were hampering progress.

CRR: Risk Reduction Planning – the review of documentation, policies and protocols were off target due to legal case preparation and the temporary promotion of personnel. Following a question from Councillor C Philpott Committee were informed that the Service was involved in an increased number of legal cases, which was time consuming, given the professional approach that was required. Budgetary Constraints were discussed, whereby Committee suggested investigating the possibility of employing a Legal Officer between all three Welsh Services.

RESOLUTION

It was RESOLVED that

The report be received and noted.

7 TO RECEIVE A REPORT ON THE TRANSPORT SCRUTINY EXERCISE HELD 12TH OCTOBER 2009

Area Manager Derek Masson introduced a report on the scrutiny of the Service's Transport Department which formed part of the forward work plan previously agreed by the Committee.

The Head of Department presented relevant information to Members, who subsequently scrutinised the subject area and associated matters that were considered appropriate.

Members were pleased that the Service had engaged in a collaborative approach with the other Welsh Fire and Rescue Services in completing an all Wales Fire Appliance specification. The Service's commitment to reducing its carbon footprint by purchasing the lowest output exhaust emission Fire Appliances was also demonstrated.

The Transport Manager outlined the Service's fleet replacement programme, and gave a detailed description of the servicing and maintenance requirements of the fleet and associated equipment. Members were also assured that Health and Safety requirements were embedded in all relevant work activities.

Scrutiny Members concluded it was clear that resources were focused in specific areas of need and were satisfied that all scrutiny focus areas had been addressed.

As a result of the scrutiny exercise and the subsequent evaluation documentation received from Members, the following recommendations were made:

1. Continue to collaborate with North and South Wales Fire and Rescue Services.
2. Maintain the commitment to purchase Fire Appliances and similar vehicles that contribute to reducing the Service's carbon footprint.
3. Implement an appropriate recruitment strategy to replace workshops staff when some personnel retire in the next few years.

Area Manager Masson reported that these recommendations endorsed the work already undertaken within the department. Committee congratulated the Transport department for performing exceptionally well in an array of areas.

RESOLUTION

It was RESOLVED that

The report be noted.

8 TO RECEIVE AN UPDATE REPORT ON THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT MEASURE

Members provided with an update on the revised performance assessment framework currently being developed by the Wales Audit Office under the recently introduced Local Government (Wales) Measure 2009.

Area Manager Masson explained that the Measure was designed to confirm that improvements made in the Service as a whole were defined and based upon citizen and community needs and that Local Authorities were demonstrating that they were meeting those needs.

For Fire Authorities the assessment framework once finalised would consist of three key aspects:

- Corporate Assessment
- Performance Assessment
- Operational Assurance of Service Delivery

Members noted that the Service was in the process of responding to the Wales Audit Office (WAO) formal consultation agenda regarding the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2009.

Reference was made to correspondence received from the Auditor General who had highlighted his commitment to applying the principle of proportionate activity and a reduction in overall fees for the assessment process. However the aspect of overall cost impact on the Fire Authority remained pending. Mr Rob Powell, WAO Relationship Manager, noted that whilst changes for Fire and Rescue Authorities would be less significant, a key aspect would involve additional reporting to the public.

Committee gave consideration to the draft timescales for implementation of the measure and requested further updates to be provided, as appropriate.

RESOLUTION

It was RESOLVED that the report be received for information.

9 TO RECEIVE THE INTERNAL AUDIT REPORT 2009/10

The Chair welcomed Mr Huw Thomas and Mr Meirwyn Thomas from the Internal Audit Department at Carmarthenshire County Council who presented the Draft Internal Audit Programme for 2009/10.

Mr H Thomas took the opportunity to convey his gratitude for the assistance and cooperation of all Fire and Rescue staff members involved in the audit process.

Members noted that preliminary discussions had already taken place with the Director of

Resources to determine the number of Internal Audit days required and to establish a draft audit programme for the forthcoming financial year for Committee's approval.

Members noted the audit approach for 2009/10, timescales and the reporting arrangements. The Draft Audit Programme was detailed for Members' attention including:

- Follow up of recommendations detailed in the 2008 - 09 Internal Audit Report – including progress made following the Review of Procurement in 2007- 08
- A review of the central Financial Management Systems including Payroll, Creditors, and Debtors.
- Testing agreed with the Director of Resources of a sample of Key Principles in the Annual Governance Statement
- Attendance at Performance, Review and Audit Committee
- Periodic meetings with the Director of Resources

Councillor C Philpott emphasised the benefits of internal auditing and the evidence this provided to show the Authority is operating efficiently and effectively and stated that she looked forward to receiving progress reports in due course.

RESOLUTION

It was RESOLVED that

The report be noted.

10 TO RECEIVE THE WALES AUDIT OFFICE ANNUAL LETTER FOR 2008/09

The Chair welcomed Mr Rob Powell from the Wales Audit Office who presented the Annual Audit letter for 2008/09 to Members.

The Annual Audit letter set out the key messages from work undertaken over the last twelve months and included a summary of audit and inspection work and reported progress against improvement actions. The main conclusions were as follows:

Appointed Auditor's Report

The Authority had complied with financial and performance improvement reporting requirements

- The Authority had appropriate arrangements to administer and report financial matters and to secure value for money in its use of resources in 2008-09
- The Authority's Improvement Plan 2009-10 met statutory requirements and provided a balanced view of its performance in 2008-09

Relationship Manager's Report

The Authority had made progress in dealing with a range of risks and now needs to address agreed priority areas as identified in this year's Joint Risk Assessment

- The Authority had made progress in reducing the levels of operational risk identified by the Peer Assessment Team and would be working to further improve the operational response of the Service

- The Authority had made progress in reducing the level of risk identified in the last Joint Risk Assessment

The Auditor concluded that the Authority's resources were properly used and accounted for in 2008/2009, with proper arrangements in place to help it achieve economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources. Councillor C Philpott requested clarification on the process of enforcing statutory inspections within the Authority should the Auditor be dissatisfied with the use of its resources, given that the current economic climate posed such risks. Mr Rob Powell emphasised the seriousness of such an occurrence, which would involve a Corporate Governance Inspection. It was however noted that such powers would be instigated as a last resort, with solid evidence that the issue had been previously highlighted to the Authority.

The Auditors thanked the Chief Fire Officer and Senior Staff for their assistance during the compilation of the report.

Members were pleased to note the positive outcome of the report and extended their gratitude to Mr Powell.

RESOLUTION

It was RESOLVED that

The Annual Audit letter be received and approved

11 TO RECEIVE THE WALES AUDIT OFFICE BUILDINGS MANAGEMENT AUDIT REPORT

The Chair welcomed Ms Joanne West from KPMG who presented the Wales Audit Office Buildings Management Audit report, which formed part of the Making the Connections agenda.

A review of the procedures in place for land and buildings management within the Service was carried out in April 2009 in order to determine whether arrangements supported improvements in efficiency and service delivery to meet the needs and expectations of users for the 21st century.

Four areas were investigated relating to Strategic Management, Performance Management and Value for Money (Strategic and Operational Management). Ms West guided Committee through the action plan and recommendations of the report and concluded that all proposals had been accepted with implementation plans already in place.

Ms West thanked all members of staff who provided assistance during the compilation of the report.

Following a question from Councillor C Philpott the Head of Estates clarified that a Station Manager's role in building management would be to provide basic assistance and direction. The role would involve reporting defects to the Estates Department and undertaking basic tests within their area of work.

RESOLUTION

It was RESOLVED that

The report be received and noted.

12 TO RECEIVE A REPORT ON THE CUSTOMER FEEDBACK ANALYSIS APRIL – SEPTEMBER 2009

Consideration was given to the 6 monthly update on complaints and compliments received during the period 1st April 2009 to 30th September 2009.

A total of 14 complaints were received, of which 5 were upheld and were generally in respect of conduct and operational matters. Members noted that the standard of complaint acknowledgement and investigation performance remained generally good.

Members were informed that a total of 49 compliments were received which covered a wide range of activities undertaken by the Service.

The previous 6 month reporting period October 2008- March reported 9 complaints and 57 compliments.

The Head of Corporate Communications and Member Support noted that a number of compliments and tokens of thanks had been received following the Service's response to the recent flooding incidents.

Councillor P Llewellyn wished to formally record her sincere gratitude to station personnel who went beyond the call of duty to provide assistance during these incidents. Committee agreed to issue Commands with a letter of appreciation.

RESOLUTION

It was RESOLVED that

- 1. The report be received and noted.***
- 2. A letter of thanks be issued to Commands to acknowledge the assistance provided during recent flooding incidents.***

13 TO RECEIVE A REPORT ON SMARTER WAYS OF WORKING

The Head of Finance reported that the Wales Audit Office undertook a number of different audits under the terms of the Wales Audit Office (WAO) Regulatory Plan. One of these, within the terms of reference for good practice work, came under the banner of 'Smarter Ways of Working', whereby the topic for examination would be negotiated between the WAO, the Chief Fire Officer and the Director of Resources.

Members noted that this year the topic agreed would be the systems and processes for managing members' and senior officers' expenses and benefits. Members were informed that the audit was currently being undertaken and the results would be presented to PRAC before the end of the financial year.

RESOLUTION

It was RESOLVED that

The report be noted.

14 TO RECEIVE THE WALES AUDIT OFFICE REVIEW OF INFORMATION SECURITY

The Head of Finance reported that quite recently there had been a number of high profile cases where personal and other sensitive data had been lost by public and private sector organisations. Members acknowledged that if such data fell into the wrong hands there would be huge potential for misuse including fraud, identity theft and other malicious acts. Should the Mid and West Wales Fire and Rescue Service lose sensitive or personal data, it could result in legal action against the organisation or even individual members of staff.

Members noted that there was a growing awareness in the public sector of the need to safeguard both electronic and physical data assets as was exemplified in the recently published Local Government Association advice on data handling. In Wales, information security best practice continued to be promoted by the Welsh Assembly within its preferred mechanism for sharing personal information between public bodies, namely the Wales Accord on the Sharing of Personal Information (WASPI). The three fire services in Wales would be obliged to adopt WASPI under the guidance given in the current Wales Fire Service Framework.

Members were informed that in recognition of the importance of adopting information security best practice and complying with any related legislation, a review of prevailing information safeguards within the Service had been sanctioned. The review would be undertaken by the Wales Audit Office as one of a small number of specialist audits to be completed during this financial year.

During the audit particular consideration would be given to the HR, Finance and ICT functions as these had been identified as being most exposed to data security threats. It was envisaged that a draft report and recommendations would be available for review at the March 2010 ICT Steering Group meeting and also made available to Members of the Performance, Review and Audit Committee and wider Fire Authority around that time.

Following a question from Councillor P James Committee were informed that BlackBerrys were utilised within the Service within strict stipulated protocols.

RESOLUTION

It was RESOLVED that

That the report be noted.

15 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

The Clerk informed Committee that in order to have the end of year figures for the Performance Management Data, the Performance, Review and Audit Committee scheduled for 19th April 2010 had been rearranged to the 26th April and Members were requested to update their diaries accordingly.