

**AWDURDOD TÂN AC ACHUB CANOLBARTH A GORLLEWIN
CYMRU**



MID AND WEST WALES FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY

**COFNODION
CYFARFOD YR AWDURDOD
GANOLFAN GYNADLEDDA
PENCADLYS Y GWASANAETH TÂN AC ACHUB
CAERFYRDDIN
Dydd Llun 4 Rhagfyr 2006**

**MINUTES
OF THE AUTHORITY MEETING
THE CONFERENCE CENTRE
FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE HEADQUARTERS
CARMARTHEN
Monday 4 December 2006**

PRESENOLDEB/ATTENDANCE

Presennol yn y Cyfarfod/Present at Meeting:

CADEIRYDD/CHAIRMAN: B J Hall
IS-GADEIRYDD/VICE CHAIRMAN: C J Crowley

AELODAU/MEMBERS: Cyng/Cllrs: J Allen-Mirehouse,
J J J Davies, T Devichand, T E Evans,
K Harris, D R James, P James,
F M Jones, G Phillips, D C Prothero,
C Morgan, C Philpott, M Smith,
P Spender, T Theophilus,
J D A Thompson, C Waller, M Williams

YMDDIHEURIADAU/APOLOGIES: Cyng/ Cllrs: J Dudley,

1. DECLARATION BY MEMBERS OF PERSONAL INTEREST

None were declared.

2. PERSONAL MATTERS

Councillor DR James reported that Councillor Pearl Llewellyn was no longer a member of the Fire Authority, and Members asked that a letter of appreciation be sent to Councillor Llewellyn, thanking her for her contribution to the work of the Authority since her appointment in 2004.

Reference was made to the recent fire in East Sussex in which two firefighters had tragically lost their lives and it was resolved that a letter of sympathy be sent on behalf of the Authority.

3. TO RECEIVE AND CONFIRM AS A TRUE RECORD THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 30TH OCTOBER 2006

The minutes of the Fire Authority meeting held on 30th October 2006 were received and confirmed as a true record.

4. TO RECEIVE THE ANNUAL AUDIT LETTER 2005/2006 AND A PRESENTATION THEREON BY THE WALES AUDIT OFFICE

Mr Ceri Stradling and Mr Bob Poulton of the Wales Audit Office were welcomed to the meeting. During his presentation of the Annual Audit Letter 2005/2006, Mr Stradling reported that the Authority's financial systems had continued to operate effectively and that appropriate governance arrangements were in place and continued to be applied. He referred to the setting up of an Audit Committee which had already been undertaken by many public sector bodies which would serve as a means of presenting audit findings to members of the Authority. It was noted that this had already been discussed by the Authority's Modernisation Working Group.

Mr Stradling made reference to the Wales Programme for Improvement (WPI) for Fire and Rescue Services, currently being finalised by the Welsh Assembly Government in its draft version. It was noted that interim arrangements had been issued by the Assembly for Fire and Rescue Services for 2006/2007 in which it had specifically asked for the production of an Improvement Plan for 2006/2007 by 31st October which the Auditors would shortly be reviewing. The Chair thanked the Auditors for their presentation and expressed thanks to staff from the Finance department for the assistance and co-operation given during the course of the Audit.

RESOLUTION

It was RESOLVED that

The Annual Audit Letter 2005/2006 be received and approved

5. TO RECEIVE AND CONSIDER THE MINUTES OF THE RESOURCES COMMITTEE HELD ON 13TH NOVEMBER TOGETHER WITH THE ADDENDUM TO THE JOINT REPORT ON THE BUDGET REQUIREMENT FOR 2007/2008.

The Chief Fire Officer reported that the budget report had been approved by the Resources Committee at their meeting held on 13th November 2006 and that the purpose of the Addendum to that report was to inform the Fire Authority of the informal discussions which had taken place with the Treasurers of the constituent authorities on 20th November 2006. As a result of these discussions a number of amendments to the original proposals had been made which would reduce the level of budget requirement for 2007/08 over that previously proposed.

During a full and frank debate with the Authorities Treasurer's there were four themes which had emanated from the constituent authorities:

- 1) That overall the increase in the Fire and Rescue Authority's budget requirement of 4.2 % on a like for like basis was more than they felt was appropriate bearing in mind that some of the 4.3 % increase on average that the Welsh Unitary Authorities had received was due to specific needs in Social Care.
- 2) That the constituent authorities had assumed within their budget build up a lesser percentage for APTC pay and price increases than had been assumed by the Mid and West Wales FRA for next year, and considered that the 3.5% included for the uniformed pay award was a little excessive.
- 3) That the constituent authorities expected to see 1% efficiency savings coming through each year. They were informed that the Fire and Rescue Authority was subject to the same WAG regime as the Unitary Authorities in this regard (albeit a year behind) and that it was confident of complying with WAG expectations.
- 4) The constituent authorities suggested that where appointments were proposed that these were phased within the 2007/08 year such that savings were released. They were informed that some more extensive phasing had already taken place in some instances however there was scope to make further adjustments.

Also discussed with the constituent authorities was the likely reduction in the levels of their Revenue Support Grant (RSG) because of the new funding arrangements for the firefighters pension scheme. Following a recent meeting of Fire and Rescue Authority officers with the Assembly, it had seemed likely that in 2007/08 the Assembly would be reducing the RSG for local authorities in Wales by £4.5 million more than the current FRA budget provision for pension liabilities. However it was possible that the Assembly would be contributing £1.4 million to this £4.5 million gap, leaving £3 million to be funded by the local authorities themselves. In the Mid and West Wales area, this funding shortfall amounted to around £1.4 million.

As a result of the discussions the Treasurer reported that the following

amendments to the budget build up had been proposed for Members consideration :-

- That the pay awards and price inflation assumed for 2007/08 be reduced: Uniformed staff pay award from 3.5% to 3%, APTC/Manual/Mechanics pay award from 3% to 2.5%, price inflation generally reduced from 3% to 2.5%, but with some upward adjustment for energy increases.
- That the proposed appointment of the Equalities Officer be delayed until after the first quarter of the year.
- That the proposed appointment of an officer for succession planning purposes in regard to Firelink be delayed until after the first quarter of the year.

It was noted that these amendments would result in a new budget requirement increase of 3.89 % on a like for like basis.

- At the end of the 2005/06 financial year there was a balance of approximately £3.9 million on the Elective Pensioners Provision. With the possible draw on this provision during 2006/07 and the need to hold a sum to cover possible employers contributions for retained staff in 2007/08, there was sufficient available to assist the constituent authorities by funding nearly £1.4 million of the 2007/08 budget requirement from this Provision. From 2008/09 onwards the Treasury would be taking on board all Pensions liabilities other than employers' contributions and ill health payments (the precise nature of which had yet to be clarified by the Assembly), thus there would be a far greater degree of consistency in budgeting from year to year.

Councillor J Thompson thanked the Treasurer for the report and on behalf of Members expressed concerns of the financial constraints facing the Unitary Authorities during the next year. He proposed that further adjustments be made in order that the Authority's budget be set at no more than 3.5% for the Financial Year 2007/2008.

Members endorsed this proposal, and mindful that under the combination order the budget was required to be set by 31st December 2006, suggested that a Special Authority meeting be held prior to this date to further consider the amended budget. Councillor D Prothero expressed his concerns with regard to making further cuts in the budget and indicated that any further reductions in the budget were not acceptable to him if they would lead to an inferior service. The Chief Fire Officer reminded members that the Fire Authority did not hold reserves and indicated that any further cuts within the budget could put at risk the continuing implementation of the Risk Reduction Plan

Councillor P James indicated that he would not be supporting the Welsh Assembly Government's decision to adopt Firelink as the radio communications system for the Fire and Rescue Service in Wales as he had concerns about the health affects of those using the tetra system.

RESOLUTION

*It was RESOLVED that
A Special Meeting of the Fire Authority be arranged for 18th December 2006 at 10.00am in order to consider an amended budget requirement for 2007/2008.*

6. TO RECEIVE AND CONSIDER THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 20TH NOVEMBER 2006

The minutes of the meeting held on 20th November 2006 were received and noted.

7. TO RECEIVE A REPORT ON MEMBERS ALLOWANCES, CONSULTATION ON DRAFT REGULATIONS

The Clerk reported that following an earlier consultation document to which the Authority had responded, draft regulations had now been received from the Minister for Finance, Local Government and Public Services on which comments were sought by 21st December 2006.

Whilst the draft regulations were relevant to County and County Borough Councils, National Park Authorities and Fire and Rescue Authorities, it was noted that the report focused on those elements that were relevant to Fire and Rescue Authorities.

Of particular note was that provision had been included in the draft regulations which would require authorities to specify a time limit for receipt of claims for travel and subsistence, the new co-optees' allowance and the publication requirements in respect of travelling and subsistence allowances. The Clerk reminded members of the need to ensure that claims, in accordance with the Authority's current Scheme of Members' Allowances, were submitted within two months of the end of the relevant period.

Members would receive an updated report when the regulations were enacted.

RESOLUTION

It was RESOLVED that

The Authority approve the report as a basis for responding to the draft regulations issued for consultation.

8. TO CONSIDER A LETTER FROM THE MINISTER FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE AND REGENERATION CONCERNING ISSUES RELATIVE TO THE AUTHORITY'S RISK REDUCTION PLAN

The Chair of the Authority had received a letter from the Minister for Social Justice and Regeneration dated 16 November 2006 which raised a number of issues relative to the Authority's Risk Reduction Plan. It was noted that letters of a similar nature had been received by North and South Wales Fire and Rescue

Authorities.

Members were asked to consider how the Authority would wish to respond to the Minister's letter. Members noted that the Chair and the Chief Fire Officer were to meet with the Minister shortly and would raise the issues contained in the letter with her.

RESOLUTION

It was RESOLVED that

A response be sent to the Minister, confirming the Authority had taken into account those issues identified in her letter in approving and finalising the Risk Reduction Plan.

9. TO RECEIVE A REPORT ON THE COMPOSITION OF THE AUTHORITY'S COMMITTEES

Members were aware that notification had been received from Pembrokeshire County Council that Cllr Pearl Llewellyn would no longer represent Pembrokeshire on the Authority and in accordance with the Constitution, the Authority was required to appoint Members to serve on its Committees and to allocate seats so that they reflected the overall political composition of the Authority.

Councillor Llewellyn had previously served on the Personnel Committee and the Authority was asked to confirm any revisions that it might wish to make to the membership of the Committees.

RESOLUTION

It was RESOLVED that

On the appointment of a new Labour representative from Pembrokeshire, that member fill the current vacancy on the Personnel Committee.

10. TO RECEIVE A REPORT ON ESTABLISHING A PROCESS FOR ADVISING MEMBERS OF INCIDENTS THAT ARE OF PRESS OR GENERAL POLITICAL INTEREST

Members were asked to consider the establishment of a process for advising them of specific calls of interest such as those which could possibly attract political interest on which Members may be approached to provide a statement.

In order that Members were made aware of, and briefed in a concise and timely manner, Officers within the Operational Risk Management department would highlight such incidents and provide a brief summary to the Press Officer for circulation to appropriate Members by email.

Examples of incidents that Members would be advised of included:-

- Multiple fire fatalities
- Special service calls with multiple fatalities
- Large incidents – over 10 pumping appliances
- Spate conditions e.g. grass fires/flooding
- Fires involving schools and other public buildings
- Occurrences that are defined by DCLG/WAG as a ‘Fire of Special Interest’ (FOSI) and reported to them as such.

Members would not be required to make statements on these bulletins but they would have the necessary information if they were approached for a comment or if they wished to formulate a response.

RESOLUTION

It was RESOLVED that

Members approve the report for implementation

- 11. TO RECEIVE A REPORT OF THE VISIT TO THE ARMISTICE DAY REMEMBRANCE CEREMONY AT THE MENIN GATE, YPRES, BELGIUM ON 11 NOVEMBER 2006 BY COUNCILLORS MRS C PHILPOTT, MR D PROTHERO AND MR P JAMES**

Members were aware that Councillors Mrs C Philpott, Mr D Prothero and Mr P James had represented the Fire Authority at the Armistice Day Remembrance Service at the Menin Gate, Ypres on 11 November 2006.

Members had reported that they felt honoured to be given the opportunity to represent the Authority at the Ceremony, where they laid a wreath at the Menin Gate in remembrance of those who lost their lives on the Salient during the Great War. The Councillors also wished to extend their gratitude to the Authority for the opportunity and privilege of attending the Ceremony, and to the Colour Party, for its participation in the formal proceedings when it joined many other UK and European Fire Services.

RESOLUTION

It was RESOLVED that

the Fire Authority is represented in Ypres in 2007 to attend the Armistice Day Remembrance Service at the Menin Gate.

- 12. TO RECEIVE ITEMS FOR INFORMATION**

Members considered the recent service delivery reports received from the County Commands. Councillors E Evans and P James drew attention to a co-responder call in Tregaron where co-responders had successfully resuscitated a

lady who had stopped breathing. The family of the lady were extremely grateful to the Crew and had asked that their thanks be expressed for their professionalism and assistance.

Councillor Morgan commended the Service for their speedy response to the recent fire at the Intertissue Plant at the Baglan Industrial Estate and for their determined efforts and skill in preventing the fire from spreading to other areas of the site.