

COMMUNITY PROFILE AND PARTNERSHIPS
OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
11 MARCH 2013

Minutes of the meeting of the Community Profile and Partnerships Overview and Scrutiny Committee of the Flintshire County Council held at County Hall, Mold on Monday, 11 March 2013.

PRESENT: Councillor B. Dunn (Chairman)

Councillors: R. Davies, C.J. Dolphin, A.I. Dunbar, R.J.T. Guest, R.G. Hampson, B. Lloyd, D.I. Mackie, W.P. Shotton, I.R. Smith and N.R. Steele-Mortimer

CONTRIBUTORS: Chief Executive, Deputy Chief Fire Officer Docx, Gary Brandrick, Senior Fire Safety Manager North Wales Fire Service.

IN ATTENDANCE:

Member Engagement Manager and Committee Officer

APOLOGIES:

Councillor M. Reece

39. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillors B. Dunn, A.I. Dunbar and P. Shotton declared an interest in the North Wales Fire and Rescue Service.

40. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 7 January 2013 were submitted.

RESOLVED:

That the minutes be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

41. NORTH WALES FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE

The Chair welcomed Dawn Docx, Deputy Chief Fire Officer of North Wales Fire and Rescue Service and Gary Brandwick, Senior Fire Safety Manager and invited them to give a presentation about the work of the Fire and Rescue Service.

The presentation covered:

- Performance information and statistics for the service from 2006-2012
- The role of fire prevention schemes such as home safety checks
- Financial performance and the challenges of budget reductions

- New demands placed on the service such as the increased demand for flood search and rescue assistance and increased collaborative working.

The Chair thanked the Deputy Chief Fire Officer and Gary Brandwick for their informative presentation and invited members to raise questions.

Councillor P. Shotton asked if the North Wales Fire and Rescue Service would undertake a full risk assessment if subject to further reviews. The Deputy Chief Fire Officer said that a sub committee of the Fire Authority regularly met to discuss options about budgets and the associated risks. Risk assessments formed part of all decisions made. She added that North Wales Fire and Rescue Service had already done a lot of work regarding efficiency savings and that they were the only service in the UK to have a joint control room with the police.

The Chief Executive, as clerk to the Fire Authority emphasised that there was limited 'room for manoeuvre' for further reduction of fire service budgets through change and modernisation. If the budget reduction expectations continued there would come a point where the requirement for an adequate and sustainable budget to ensure that fire prevention, community safety and fire and incident response work could be assured, would become a national discussion.

Councillor R.J.T. Guest said that whilst it was good to see a reduction in deaths associated with fires, he was disappointed to see that accidental home fires had not been significantly reduced (4% reduction). The Deputy Chief Fire Officer in response said that over the past 10 years, all incidences of fire had reduced by 40% in North Wales and reduction of deaths was their main focus.

Councillor R. G. Hampson asked about the number of retained fire stations and the criteria that would be employed should financial circumstances dictate possible closures. The Deputy Chief Fire Officer said that there were 36 retained fire stations and that it would be responsibility of the Fire Authority to approve the criteria.

The Chair, as a member of the Fire Authority offered the assurance that such measures would be a last resort.

Councillor A.I. Dunbar asked if the Deputy Chief Fire Officer could convey the thanks of the committee to staff at the Deeside Fire Station who raised £3000 for charity with the 5 November event. He asked if the Phoenix Project would be offered at various locations in Flintshire. The Deputy Chief Fire Officer said that she would pass on his comments to the staff at Deeside. The Phoenix Project was supported by a Welsh Government Grant and whilst the grant remained in place, the scheme would be retained.

Councillor P. Shotton spoke about a recent presentation he had attended at Mold Fire Station for the Phoenix Project and said that he was

very inspired to hear about the positive experiences of the young people who had taken part in the project.

Councillor B. Lloyd asked how the recent recruitment drive for retained personnel had progressed and asked why the rate of pay for North Wales staff differed to South Wales. The Deputy Chief Fire Officer explained there had been more expressions of interest this time, which was positive, given that the exigencies of the service could impact on family and working life, which was one of the reasons why staff left the service. The salaried scheme in South Wales had been successful to a degree, although they acknowledged the need for change in the future. In North Wales, retained fire fighters received a fee for drill nights and each incident attended.

The Chief Executive said that one of the retained fire fighters in a recent advertising campaign was an employee of Flintshire County Council; it was important for Flintshire and public bodies to promote such opportunities for public service.

Councillor R.J.T. Guest asked if the service still required staff to live/work within 5 minutes travel time to the fire station. The Deputy Chief Fire Officer said that the five minute rule applied to either home address or work address at the time of fire cover.

The Chief Executive thanked Deputy Fire Officer Docx and Gary Brandwick for their presentation.

The Chair conveyed his thanks for their attendance and presentation on behalf of the committee.

42. FORWARD WORK PLAN

The Member Engagement Manager introduced the Forward Work Programme of the Committee.

He advised that Mr. W. Roddick, the new Police and Crime Commissioner for North Wales, would attend the next meeting of the Committee on 22 April 2013 and that Sian Jones from Flintshire Community Safety partnership would attend to give an update on 20 May 2013.

Members reviewed the current programme and agreed that the following items be considered at the meeting of the Committee on 24 June 2013:

- Deeside College
- Glyndwr University

Councillor. N.R. Steele-Mortimer asked if the RNLI could be invited to give a presentation. The Member Engagement Manager advised that whilst the RNLI might not be on the designated lists of organisations for scrutiny, they could be invited to attend under section 22 (e).

The Member Engagement Manager advised that Welsh Government guidance was still awaited on scrutiny of designated persons. This led to a discussion by members about the purpose of the committee and their disappointment at the delay in legislative guidance from the Welsh Government. It was suggested that Mr Reg Kilpatrick, Director of Local Government in the Welsh Government be invited to a future committee meeting. The Member Engagement Manager said that he could approach Mr Kilpatrick. The committee agreed that a letter should be sent to the office of Carl Sergeant AM, Minister for Local Government and Communities to voice their concerns.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the Forward Work Programme be agreed subject to the above additions.
- (b) That a letter be sent from the committee to Carl Sergeant AM, Minister outlining its concerns about the delay in guidance on the scrutiny of designated organisations.
- (c) That the Member Engagement Manager contact Reg Kilpatrick to invite him to attend a future meeting of the committee.
- (d) That the RNLI be invited to attend a future meeting of the committee.

43. DURATION OF MEETING

The meeting commenced at 10.00 am and ended at 11.23 am.

44. MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC AND PRESS IN ATTENDANCE

There was one member of the press in attendance.