

COMMISSIONERS FOR SOUTH WALES FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE

MINUTES OF THE COMMISSIONERS FOR SOUTH WALES FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE MEETING HELD ON THURSDAY 26 SEPTEMBER 2024 AT 1000 HRS IN MEETING ROOM 08 AND REMOTELY VIA TEAMS

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT:

Carl Foulkes, Chair
Kirsty Williams
Vij Randeniya

APOLOGIES:

Baroness Wilcox of Newport

OFFICERS PRESENT: T/CFO Stuart Millington, ACO Alison Reed – Director of People Services, T/ACFO Brian Thompson - Director of Technical Services, Dominic Mika – Director of Strategic Change and Transformation, Lisa Mullan – Head of Finance, Procurement and Property, T/AM Matt Jones – Head of Operations, Gabrielle Greathead – Interim Monitoring Officer, T/AM Mike Wyatt – Risk Reduction, Christian Landeg-John – Advisor to Commissioners, Wayne Thomas – T/Head of Corporate Support

1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest made.

2. CHAIRPERSON'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

There were no Chairperson's announcements.

3. TO RECEIVE THE MINUTES OF

a. BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS FOR SOUTH WALES FIRE & RESCUE SERVICE MEETING HELD ON THURSDAY 29 AUGUST 2024

The Commissioners agreed the minutes from Thursday 29 August 2024 as a true record of discussions and no matters arising.

b. FINANCE AND AUDIT COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON FRIDAY 26 JULY 2024

The Commissioners agreed the minutes from Friday 26 July 2024 as a true record of discussions and no matters arising.

4. UPDATE ON OUTSTANDING ACTIONS

Kirsty Williams asked for clarity to be added to the action log item surrounding the Health and Safety comparative data and to include the timescales of when this will be brought back to the meeting.

5. REPORTS FOR DECISION

5.1 WELSH LANGUAGE STANDARDS – ANNUAL MONITORING REPORT

Wayne Thomas, Temporary Head of Corporate Support provided an overview of actions that the organisation has undertaken to comply with the different classes of Standards during the financial year 2023/24 and request the Commissioners approve the publication of the report. Kirsty Williams commented that the style and presentation of the report is very accessible and user friendly to allow people to engage with the report.

There was a discussion whether the Service captures data around the amount of home fire safety visits conducted through the medium of Welsh and if there is an active offer for the public to request visits through the medium of Welsh. Wayne Thomas suggested that the home fire safety team can include an additional question on their script relating to language preference. Brian Thompson and Mike Wyatt will look further into capturing this data along with our Business Fire Safety inspections.

Wayne Thomas explained that in terms of home fire safety advice, this is created bilingually, and the Community Safety team attends Welsh medium schools for educational awareness. The Commissioners noted that it would be positive to show the figures of number of Welsh schools attended and agreed where we don't have the data, it can be added to our improvement area.

Carl Foulkes queried the statistics of Welsh speakers in the Service showing as zero Welsh skills and queried whether this is down to a data capturing issue. As a Service, we want to encourage our staff to recognise that they do have some basic conversational Welsh language skills and not underestimate their ability to speak Welsh. Carl Foulkes queried whether our Control staff can converse bilingually. CFO Millington advised that it is a standard requirement for our Control room to be able to speak bilingually.

The Commissioners agreed that in terms of targets and milestones there is good points to add to our next steps and milestones piece to demonstrate where we want to be with our targets and approach. The Commissioners would like to see additional information on the Services' objectives and contributions to the Wales million speakers strategy.

RESOLVED THAT

- 5.1.1 The Commissioners welcome the report and approve the recommendation to publish the report.
- 5.1.2 The Commissioners ask that we pull data elements on the operational aspects and a next steps section and link into the targets and approach for the future.

5.2 COMMITMENT TO NFCC CORE CODE OF ETHICS

Dominic Mika, Director of Strategic Change and Transformation requested the Commissioners support to reassert our adoption and commitment to the NFCC Code of Ethics principles.

The report sets out the 5 ethical principles which provides the foundation for all fire and rescue services. The Code of Ethics have been discussed at the middle managers meetings and transformation roadshows. Vij Randeniya stated it is important that this talked about in the Service as it sets the standard on how things are done.

Carl Foulkes stated that everyone should be aware of the Code of Ethics and it is important that we relaunch and consider how we make this relevant to fit South Wales Fire and Rescue Service. It was discussed how we engage with our staff about adopting the Code of Ethics and a setting a communications plan with our statement. Kirsty Williams would like this to be brought back to the Board of Commissioners in six months for an update on our position.

RESOLVED THAT

- 5.2.1 The Commissioners agreed the recommendation of the Service's adoption of the NFCC Core Code of Ethics.
- 5.2.2 The Commissioners affirmed their commitment to improving the values, culture, fairness and diversity of the Service by an organisational statement based on the NFCC Core Code of Ethics.
- 5.2.3 The Commissioners request an update on our position in six months' time.

6. REPORTS FOR INFORMATION

6.1 SWFRS AUTOMATIC FIRE ALARM (AFA) RESPONSE CHANGE UPDATE

Mike Wyatt, Temporary Area Manager provided a verbal update on the current progress of the Automatic Fire Alarm (AFA) response change. The team have been working under a new communication strategy and have made rapid progress. The new webpage is live and FAQs are being continually updated based on feedback and questions. Social media messages, letters and bilingual leaflets handed to crews has been completed, with further leaflets being sent out on 27 September. Individual local authorities have been written to. The email address is live and feedback is being actioned on a daily basis. There will be engagement stakeholder meetings which are being collated from the webpage and Newport Museum will be offered to attend due to their concerns. An educational animation is sent out on a weekly basis across our social media platforms. David Lozano has been working closely with Media and Communications to execute the engagement and communication strategy.

RESOLVED THAT

- 6.1.1 The Commissioners welcomed the update and acknowledge the progression that has been made on the AFA response change.

6.2 STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS 2023/2024

Lisa Mullan, Head of Finance, Procurement and Property provided an overview of the Statement of Accounts for 2023/24. The document summarises the financial position and helps demonstrate accountability and transparency. The report is related to 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024 and considers the statutory ISA260 report, the final audited statement of accounts and the letter of representation.

The Statement of Accounts has been circulated to the Chair prior to this meeting for signing upon agreement from the Chair. Once agreed and signed, the documents will be added to our website.

Lisa Mullan summarised that there were changes since the draft and reassured the Commissioners there were no adjustments. Kate Harvard, Audit Wales explained with all being well, the Auditor General will certify the accounts as there are no significant issues. Kate explained it is their intention to issue an 'unqualified' audit of the report and thanked Lisa Mullan and her Finance team for the work they have delivered well within the statutory lines. Carl Foulkes reiterated that they recognise the 'unqualified' audit statement and congratulated the Finance team.

RESOLVED THAT

- 6.2.1 The Commissioners received the ISA 260 report of the Appointed Auditor and noted the letter of representation.
- 6.2.2 The Commissioners noted and authorised the audited Statement of Accounts and the Chair will sign the document following the meeting.

7. FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME FOR BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS FOR SOUTH WALES FIRE & RESCUE SERVICE 2024/2025

CFO Millington stated that all areas for today's meeting have been brought to the meeting and we are back on track with the Forward Working Programme.

There was a discussion around the South Wales Fire and Rescue Service inspection report. CFO Millington will do a gap analysis and this will be brought to the December Board of Commissioners. Brian Thompson advised that he has an operational staff member dedicated to the work on operational effectiveness reports that will report to him. Brian Thompson will provide a written update on the progress. Kirsty Williams advised it would be useful to have an update on the other thematics and to schedule in an appropriate section for an update.

CFO Millington updated the group that the NFCC new Firefighting national operational guidance and the foundation for firefighting documents have been approved for publication.

8. TO CONSIDER ANY ITEMS OF BUSINESS THAT THE CHAIRPERSON DEEMS URGENT (PART 1 OR 2)

There were no items that the Chairperson deemed urgent.