



Gwasanaeth Tân ac Achub
De Cymru
South Wales
Fire and Rescue Service

27 March 2024

Jenny Rathbone MS
Chair of the Equality and Social Justice Committee
Welsh Parliament
Cardiff Bay
Cardiff
CF99 1SN

Sent via email: SeneddEquality@Senedd.Wales

Dear Chair,

South Wales Fire and Rescue Service

Firstly, please know that we see your inquiry as a valuable part of our work to develop proposals for the future governance of South Wales Fire and Rescue Service, and which are most likely to minimise the risk of further failings (Commissioners' Terms of Reference, No.6).

We are pleased to provide the following information in response to each of your questions.

Appointment of Stuart Millington as Interim Chief Fire Officer (CFO)

1. *Why was it necessary to appoint an Interim Chief Fire Officer and what is the anticipated duration of the appointment?*
 - 1.1. The most pressing reason for appointing an interim CFO was to provide immediate capacity and experience during the current intervention. There are only three operational staff at executive level, and the loss of the substantive CFO following the publication of the Morris Review left an immediate gap in on-call cover arrangements.

Comisiynwyr ar gyfer Gwasanaeth Tân ac Achub De Cymru
Pencadlys Gwasanaeth Tân ac Achub De Cymru,
Parc Busnes Forest View, Llantrisant, Pont-y-clun, CF72 8LX.
Ffôn 01443 232000 • Ffacs 01443 232180
www.decymru-tan.gov.uk

Rydym yn croesawu gohebiaeth yn y gymraeg a'r saesneg - byddwn yn ymateb yn gyfartal i'r ddau ac yn ateb yn eich dewis iaith heb oedi.

Commissioners for South Wales Fire and Rescue Service
South Wales Fire and Rescue Service Headquarters,
Forest View Business Park, Llantrisant, Pontyclun, CF72 8LX.
Telephone 01443 232000 • Fax 01443 232180
www.southwales-fire.gov.uk

We welcome correspondence in Welsh and English - we will respond equally to both and will reply in your language of choice without delay.

- 1.2. The review had identified concerns about the effectiveness of the executive leadership team, and it was felt by the Commissioners that an interim leader from outside SWFRS was needed.
 - 1.3. We were determined that should be a secondment and a 'Welsh solution', to enable us to move at pace.
 - 1.4. The secondment is for an initial six-month period but may be extended if recruitment of a permanent CFO or Chief Executive Officer cannot take up the role in that timeframe.
2. *Who made the decision to recommend the appointment of Stuart Millington as Interim Chief Fire Officer? What involvement, if any, did the following have in the appointment process (in each instance please specify the nature of the involvement):*
- a. *Welsh Government officials;*
 - b. *the Chief Fire and Rescue Adviser and Inspector for Wales, Dan Stephens;*
 - c. *the Chief Fire Officers of North Wales, and Mid and West Wales Fire and Rescue Services;*
 - d. *the responsible Welsh Government Minister (either that the Deputy Minister for Social Partnership or the Minister for Social Justice)?*
- 2.1. Vij Randeniya led a process to identify available and suitable individuals in Wales with operational competence at Assistant Chief Fire Officer rank and above and who would be able to relocate to the SWFRS area to be part of the on-call rota.
 - 2.2. We had already ruled out an internal temporary promotion within SWFS.
 - 2.3. Via the Chief Fire and Rescue Advisor, the CFOs at Mid and West Wales FRS and North Wales FRS were asked for the names of potential secondees who met that criteria.
 - 2.4. Having identified those individuals and briefed us about them, the CFOs and Chief Fire and Rescue Advisor played no further part in the selection. Obviously, CFO Dawn Docx was consulted to confirm the release of Stuart Millington on secondment.
 - 2.5. No Welsh Government Minister or officials were involved in identifying individuals or approving the secondment.
 - 2.6. All four Commissioners were involved in reviewing the available individuals against our criteria of having appropriate experience, skills, and being available to relocate to the SWFRS area.

3. *During our evidence sessions with trade unions, both the Fire Brigades Union and the Fire and Rescue Services Association expressed concerns regarding the appointment. In particular Tristan Ashby told us: “we were surprised that somebody without any proven track record and somebody who wasn't a chief, but was an assistant chief, was chosen,” adding that they did not understand how the appointment was made or what due diligence was undertaken. How would you respond to these concerns?*
 - 3.1. The Commissioners do not share Mr Ashby's concerns.
 - 3.2. No individuals in Wales at Chief or Deputy level were available or met the criteria.
 - 3.3. Stuart Millington is a hugely experienced fire service leader, with experience serving in different FRs in Wales and England. He has already proved to be an effective and empathetic leader in his time at SWFRS.
 - 3.4. Beyond his operational and leadership expertise, CFO Millington's breadth of experience closely match the transformation programme requirements at SWFRS and align with the Commissioners' terms of reference. (Appendix A).

Appointment of a permanent successor as Chief Fire Officer

4. *What are the anticipated timescales for the appointment of a permanent successor as Chief Fire Officer for South Wales? What is the target start date? Do you have a target start date?*
 - 4.1. Work is already underway to prepare the recruitment materials, so a full-scale recruitment process will launch very soon. The advertising and shortlisting process could take up to three months and it is likely that the successful candidate will need to give three months' notice to their current employer.
 - 4.2. We have not set a target start date beyond 'as soon as practicable'.
5. *Who will be responsible for deciding the recruitment criteria for the permanent successor as Chief Fire Officer?*
 - 5.1. The Commissioners and executive leadership team are in the process of writing a person specification and a role description that is designed to meet specific current and emerging needs of the SWFRS. Many of the role requirements are set out in the Gold Book standard terms and conditions.
6. *How would you involve staff and stakeholders in the appointment process?*
 - 6.1. How we involve colleagues and stakeholders in the recruitment is still being developed, but they will be a vital part of a challenging process designed to identify an exceptional individual to lead the Service.

6.2. It is likely that we will invite staff and stakeholders to be part of panels that will meet with shortlisted candidates, ask them questions, and be part of discussions and exercises. They will then provide feedback to assist the appointment panel with its deliberations. The exact exercise will be developed in partnership with the relevant staff-led Transformation Programme working group.

7. *How do you intend to ensure a diverse field of candidates for the position of Chief Fire Officer? Will For example, might you consider appointing a candidate from a different professional field or background?*

7.1. To ensure we attract a broad and diverse field, we will be working with an executive search consultancy with specific experience of recruiting to blue light and public sector leadership roles.

Resources for undertaking your work

8. *How will costs incurred as a result of your work be paid for? Will they be met from the Welsh Government budget or the South Wales Fire and Rescue Service budget?*

8.1. The Commissioners fees and activities driven by our Terms of Reference are paid from the SWFRS budget.

9. *What dedicated resources have been made available for your use within the South Wales Fire and Rescue Service?*

9.1. The Commissioners will be making use of the talented and knowledgeable staff across SWFRS, because much of the work arising from our Terms of Reference forms part of core duties and roles.

9.2. There is already an established team that support the governance function previously undertaken by the Fire Authority.

9.3. A new post of Director of Strategic Change and Transformation has been created to oversee the Transformation Programme.

9.4. We have a dedicated Personal Assistant, and a Project Progress Administrator is being recruited, both on secondment from other roles within SWFRS.

10. *What dedicated resources have been made available for your use within the Welsh Government?*

10.1. We have access to the existing staff within the Welsh Government's Fire Services Branch.

Working together

11. *How will you ensure effective communication between all four commissioners? Given the nature of your other commitments, you are likely to be working from different locations across the country how will you ensure that this does not become a barrier to collaboration?*

11.1. Commissioners have online meetings and telephone conversations as required, in addition to working together in person for one day a week. Our PA maintains an actions and contact register.

12. *What arrangements will you put in place for regular reporting on progress?*

12.1. The Commissioners initially met with the Deputy Minister and/or Welsh Government staff every week to provide a progress report against our Terms of Reference.

12.2. An oversight board, chaired by Welsh Government officials, has now been established, and meets formally every month and informally in-between.

We believe this answers the questions raised, but please feel free to contact us again if we can be of further assistance.

Yours sincerely,

Commissioner for South Wales Fire and Rescue Service

cc Vij Randeniya
 Lady Wilcox
 Kirsty Williams
 Carl Foulkes
 CFO Stuart Millington

Appendix A – CFO Stuart Millington biography

After spending 14 years working in a variety of roles in the former Clwyd and then North Wales Fire and Rescue Service (NWFRS), I transferred to Greater Manchester Fire and Rescue Service (GMFRS), in November 2008.

I spent six years working in a variety of roles both within GMFRS as well as in a seconded position working for the Association of Greater Manchester Authorities, and during this time I was responsible for producing the Greater Manchester Strategic Assessment.

My time in Greater Manchester allowed me to experience a myriad of different challenges and work to improve the life experiences and chances of people and communities in highly deprived and socially challenging parts of inner-city Manchester and Salford, as well as across all ten Greater Manchester Boroughs.

In November 2014 I returned to NWFRS as an Area Manager with responsibility for Prevention and Protection as the Senior Fire Safety Manager (SFSM).

During this time, I was the Welsh lead for Children and Young People (CYP) and worked collaboratively with colleagues in the other two Welsh fire and rescue services towards our common goals, as well as representing Wales at the NFCC CYP Executive Board.

As SFSM I was instrumental in developing community safety activities on a journey from the traditional Home Fire Safety Check towards the 'Safe and Well' checks that incorporated brief intervention conversations regarding healthy eating, exercise, smoking, drug or alcohol use and mental well-being, as well as introducing the use of the falls risk assessment toolkit (FRAT) as part of an integrated offer to residents.

I was the North Wales Blue Light services lead for 'Prevent and Respond', the group that designed, developed, and introduced new ways of preventing and responding to incidents from a tri service perspective. This saw the introduction of a falls response service called the Community Assistance Team (CAT). CAT was made up of NWFRS staff members who responded to non-injured fallers on behalf of the Welsh Ambulance Services NHS Trust.

I have also led on the introduction of a structured approach to support North Wales Police in providing a timely response to those who are highly vulnerable and who may be missing from their homes or healthcare establishments, with highly complex needs.

In September 2017 I moved into the Senior Operations Manager (SOM) role and became responsible for the delivery of our operational emergency response.

Time spent in this role allowed me to oversee some key pieces of work including devising new ways of working with 'on call' firefighters to maintain and improve Service availability, as well as the introduction and implementation of National Operational Guidance and learning. I was also responsible for progressing the tender and introduction of new items of equipment on an 'all-Wales' basis, including breathing apparatus, fire kit and fire appliances.

In November 2019 I moved into the Senior Training and Development Manager (STDM) role and worked to challenge and reform the way in which training was being delivered in North Wales. However, as that work was beginning to gather momentum in early 2020, Covid struck and I led for the Service in much of the work to maintain business continuity and a suitable operational response in a socially distanced and locked down world.

I led on the introduction of several control measures including safe systems of work, PPE and Covid testing, as well as work to support the introduction of Rainbow hospitals and an emergency mortuary. I also supported partners in the work to roll out inoculations.

In February 2021 I was promoted to Assistant Chief Fire Officer (ACFO) with strategic responsibility for all operational matters, including response, preparedness, procurement, Fire Control, as well as Fleet and Training and Development.

Soon after which we began to emerge from Covid, and I led the organisation's return to its new normality and supported staff transition back into the workplace.

I led on an operational management restructure that moved from functional departments to area-based teams, all in a bid to gain a better understanding and more timely response to the local issues facing staff and partners.

As part of filling the new operational management structure, I led on a review and overhaul of the internal promotional process and introduced annual promotional boards with full transparency and communication with candidates at every stage.

As Armed Forces lead, I worked to support the introduction of the Armed Forces Covenant and achieved firstly bronze and subsequently silver and then gold award status in the Armed Forces Employer Recognition Awards.

I have also recently supported the NFCC response to assist with appliances and equipment in the Ukraine and ensured that North Wales was part of the last three convoys to drive to the Ukraine and Poland border.

At NWFRS, I chaired the Health, Safety and Wellbeing Committee, and have instigated work to improve the organisations position in relation to contaminants, and this has included the introduction of safe systems of work to remove contaminants, clean cab solutions and the installation of two Breathing Apparatus washing machines.

I also chaired the Operational Learning Committee. This committee oversees and holds to account the work of seven subgroups: Operational Assurance, Operational Learning, Training and Development, National Operational Guidance, Research and Innovation, Risk Information, and Business Continuity. It is through this committee that I have led on the organisational response to the recommendations from Grenfell, Manchester Arena Inquiry and the Chief Fire and Rescue Advisor for Wales' thematic reviews.

I was the strategic lead for business continuity arrangements in the event of industrial action and moved the organisation to the position where it was prepared to provide a reduced service in the event of strike days being called.

I led on business continuity planning for a national power outage and have recently worked with the Head of Control to ensure robust arrangements are in place in the event of a national or regional loss of the 999 networks. I am the Service strategic representative on the ESMCP Fire Customer Group.

I represent Wales at the NFCC Operations, Preparedness and Response Committee, as well as being the Welsh Strategic lead for National Resilience and NILO.

I am the Vice Chair for the Local Resilience Forum (LRF) and I am the Chair of the LRF Coordination Committee. I also represent North Wales Fire and Rescue Service on North Wales Public Service Boards.

I recently sponsored and oversaw the completion of our RDS Experience Review, written by 'on call' firefighters, for 'on call' firefighters in a bid to break down barriers and allow a better experience to be had, with the goal to improve recruitment and retention.

I regularly present items for discussion and decision to the Fire Authority and have supported Members in several working groups, including most recently to develop and introduce an Environmental Strategy and the subordinate documents that will help to achieve the Welsh Government target of public services being carbon neutral by 2030. I have also supported the Fire Authority in working to introduce a new operational response model for North Wales following public consultation as part of an extensive Emergency Cover Review.

I am the current Chair of the Local Pensions Board and represent North Wales at the Welsh Firefighters Pension Scheme Advisory Board.

For the last two years I have also supported the NFCC Executive Leadership Programme and have assessed potential candidates and provided feedback to them after their assessments.