

Annual Report

ANNUAL REPORT OF THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE OF NORTH WALES FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY 2025/26

Background

This is the Standards Committee's twentieth-first annual report to the North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority ("the Fire Authority") and spans the period from April 2025 to March 2026. Legislation requires that Standards Committees to meet at least once annually and that they prepare a report on their activity for consideration by the Fire Authority.

The Terms of Reference of the Standards Committee provide a remit to promote and maintain high standards of conduct by Members of the Fire Authority. Also, where statute permits, to receive reports and complaints about Members and to conduct or oversee investigations and make recommendations to the Fire Authority.

Membership

The Standards Committee membership has changed during 2025/26. The Standards Committee's membership is as follows:

Independent Members

- Gill Murgatroyd 01/09/23 – 31/08/27 (serving for a second term)
- Gareth Pritchard 01/09/23 – 31/08/27 (serving for a second term)

Fire and Rescue Authority Members

- Councillor Ian Hodge (21/07/2025 until the next council elections)
- Councillor John Brynmor Hughes (20/06/2022 until the next council elections)

Attendance

Meetings were held virtually on the following dates with the named members in attendance:

- **27th March 2025**
- **27th October 2025**

27th March 2025 - present: Julia Hughes (Chair), Sally Ellis (Deputy Chair), Gareth Pritchard, Gill Murgatroyd, Cllr John Brynmor Hughes

27 October 2025 – present: Julia Hughes (Chair), Sally Ellis (Deputy Chair), Gill Murgatroyd, Cllr John Brynmor Hughes, Cllr Ian Hodge

Issues Discussed

At its meeting on the 27th of March 2025-

- The Chair provided feedback from the National Standards Committee Chair's Forum.
- The Standards Committee considered and approved its twentieth annual report to the Fire Authority
- As a regular standing item, the Committee received a report on the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales's "Our Findings" informing Members about recent findings made by the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales ("PSOW")
- Members' attendance at meetings was reported. There was no requirement to write to constituent authorities as there were no Members of the Fire Authority whose attendance fell below 50%;
- The Standards Committee commenced its rolling review of the Fire Authority Social Media Protocol requesting that further information is obtained.

The Committee met again on the 27th of October 2025-

- The Chair provided feedback from the National Standards Committee Chair's Forum.
- The Chair provided feedback from the Chair's Ethical Liaison meeting held on 25th of September 2025.
- The Standards Committee received a report on its members and their terms of appointment and recruitment of new independent members.
- The Standards Committee undertook a rolling review of the Fire Authority Local Resolution Procedure and recommended changes.
- The Standards Committee continued its rolling review of the Fire Authority Social Media Protocol and that the existing provisions were adequate but suggested renaming them as 'Social Media within Meetings Protocol', with an added link to the WLGA guidance.
- As a regular standing item, the Standards Committee received a report on the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales's "Our Findings" informing Members about recent findings made by the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales ("PSOW").
- The Standards Committee received a report on the Adjudication Panel for Wales and PSOW annual report. These provide statistical data on the number of complaints and hearings into alleged breaches of the code over the year.
- The Committee received a report on the PSOW Annual Report.
- Members' attendance at meetings was reported. There was no requirement to write to constituent authorities as there were no Members of the Fire Authority whose attendance fell below 50%;

During the course of its meetings, the Standards Committee has considered feedback from the National Forum for Standards Committee Chairs and feedback from the Chair of the Standards Committee attended the Chair's Ethical Liaison meeting held on 25th of September 2025. These forums are an opportunity to share good practice and build consensus around common areas of work. The views expressed there can be taken into account when the Committee considers issues such as amendments to codes and protocols.

Training

The committee aims to undertake training at each of its meetings on matters pertinent to its terms of reference.

Forward Work Programme

The Committee has set itself an annual forward work programme to ensure that it fulfils its terms of reference and considers all items that it needs to cover within a year. Regular standing items include "Our Findings" from the Ombudsman's website, feedback from the National Forum and Chair's meetings, members' attendance as well as training on its roles and responsibilities.

The Committee also sets itself a multi-year programme to review various codes and protocols within its terms of reference. Each is considered at least once per Fire Authority term. That programme commenced following the elections in 2022 and remains under review.

Complaints against Members of the Fire and Rescue Authority

There were no complaints about Fire Authority Members during this period. Consequently, there were no referrals under the local resolution process or to the Adjudication Panel for Wales or the Standards Committee to hold a hearing in respect of an alleged breach of the code.

Group Leaders' Duty to Promote Ethical Behaviour

The Fire Authority does not divide its membership by political grouping. However, the Committee Chair and Vice Chair will meet with the Chairs of the Fire Authority and Audit Committee to ensure the Committee adds value.

Financial Implications

The budget for the Standards Committee is managed through a single budget heading for all Fire Authority costs. Independent members of the Standards Committee are entitled to claim remuneration based on meetings and events attended. For attending meetings in this financial year, a total of £1271 has been claimed.

Conclusion

The Standards Committee recommends that the North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority note its annual report for 2025/26