

NORTH WALES FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY

Minutes of the meeting of **North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority** held on **Monday 20 October 2025** virtually via **Teams**. Meeting commenced at **09.50**.

Councillor

Dylan Rees (Chair)
Mark Young (Deputy Chair)
Carol Beard
Tina Claydon
Paul Cunningham
Ann Davies
Jeff Evans
Chrissy Gee
Alan Hughes
John Brynmor Hughes
John Ifan Jones
Gwynfor Owen
Beverley Parry-Jones
Austin Roberts
Rondo Roberts
Paul Rogers
Gareth Sandilands
Gareth Williams
Antony Wren

Representing

Anglesey County Council
Denbighshire County Council
Conwy County Borough Council
Flintshire County Council
Flintshire County Council
Denbighshire County Council
Anglesey County Council
Flintshire County Council
Denbighshire County Council
Gwynedd Council
Anglesey County Council
Gwynedd Council
Wrexham County Borough Council
Conwy County Borough Council
Wrexham County Borough Council
Wrexham County Borough Council
Denbighshire County Council
Gwynedd Council
Flintshire County Council

Also present:

Dawn Docx
Helen MacArthur
Justin Evans
Mike Plant
Paul Kay
Dafydd Edwards
Gareth Owens
Steve Morris
Llinos Evans
Natalie Jones
Carwyn Rees
Kieron Vickery
Heledd Davies
Lisa Allington

Chief Fire Officer (CFO)
Assistant Chief Fire Officer (ACFO)
Assistant Chief Fire Officer (ACFO)
Area Manager Planning, Performance and Transformation
Area Manager Fire Safety
Treasurer
Clerk and Monitoring Officer
Head of ICT
Head of Corporate Communications
Welsh Language Officer
Audit Wales
Audit Wales
Atebol Translation Services
Members' Services

1 APOLOGIES

Councillor

Ian Hodge
Gareth A Roberts
Arwyn Herald Roberts
Dale Selvester

Representing

Flintshire County Council
Gwynedd Council
Gwynedd Council
Flintshire County Council

ABSENT

Councillor

Bryan Apsley
Chris Hughes
Marc Jones

Representing

Wrexham County Borough Council
Conwy County Borough Council
Wrexham County Borough Council

The above apologies were offered and accepted.

2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

2.1 There were no declarations of interest to record.

3 NOTICE OF URGENT MATTERS

3.1 Members were advised that Zoom were experiencing widespread technical issues and so the meeting had been moved to Teams; however, as a result there were no translation facilities available. It was agreed by all present that the meeting proceed, and should Members wish to speak in Welsh a summary would also be provided in English.

4 MINUTES OF THE FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING HELD ON 21 JULY 2025

4.1 The minutes of the North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority (the Authority) Annual General Meeting held on 21 July 2025 were submitted for approval.

4.2 It was noted that item 6.2 referred to the Deputy Chair of the Audit Committee being appointed at the next Audit Committee meeting. Members were advised that as yet, no-one had put their name forward for the role.

4.3 The Clerk confirmed that should the Audit Committee Chair not be available for a specific meeting, another Member would be asked to Chair in their absence.

4.4 **RESOLVED to:**

- i) **approve the FRA AGM minutes from 21 July 2025 as a true and correct record of the meeting held.**

5 MINUTES OF THE FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY BUSINESS MEETING HELD ON 21 JULY 2025

5.1 The minutes of the Authority business meeting held on 21 July 2025 were submitted for approval.

5.2 **RESOLVED to:**

- i) **approve the FRA business meeting minutes from 21 July 2025 as a true and correct record of the meeting held.**

6 MATTERS ARISING

- 6.1 There were no matters arising.

7 CHAIR'S REPORT

- 7.1 It was noted that a written paper had been provided to Members to inform them on the meetings and events attended by the Chair and Deputy Chair of the Authority in their official capacities between July and September 2025.
- 7.2 The Chair added that since the paper had been written, Cllr Sharon Doleman had been required to step down from the Authority as she had now been appointed as a Cabinet Member for Conwy County Borough Council. The Chair took this opportunity to congratulate Cllr Doleman on her new role and gave thanks for her hard work and dedication during her term with the Authority. It was noted that a new EDI Champion would now be required and interested persons would be asked to submit their names in due course.
- 7.3 **RESOLVED to:**
- i) Note the information provided within the paper.**

8 CULTURAL IMPROVEMENT TO PROMOTIONS PROCESS

- 8.1 CFO Docx presented the Cultural Improvement to Promotions Process which provided 'a deep dive' into the changes made to North Wales Fire and Rescue Service's (the Service) promotion processes since 2021. The report outlined progress to date, actions taken in response to the CREST report recommendations, and the next steps to further strengthen transparency, fairness, and consistency.
- 8.2 A Member asked how the wellbeing of those employees who had been in temporary posts for a significant period was managed. The CFO responded that since 2021, temporary roles had been restricted to between six and twelve months to safeguard the wellbeing of staff and to provide development opportunities to as many staff as possible.
- 8.3 It was further asked how success would be measured and the CFO responded that as a start the Fire Family Survey, a staff survey undertaken every two years, would be utilised as an opportunity to gauge whether staff were beginning to trust the process more.
- 8.4 It was queried whether there would be an independent review of the changes being made to assess their effectiveness. ACFO MacArthur confirmed that an independent consultant had been brought in to assess the improvements made so far as well as to identify areas where further improvements might be required.

8.5 The Chair confirmed that positive feedback had been received by Union Representatives around the cultural changes that had been made to date.

8.6 **RESOLVED to:**

- i) **Note the progress made, endorse the ongoing programme of improvements, and support the next steps as outlined in the report.**

9 TRAINING CENTRE PROJECT UPDATE

9.1 ACFO Evans delivered the Training Centre Project Update paper, a progress update on the training centre project following the September meeting of the Training Centre Project Board, and which outlined key developments, risks and next steps.

9.2 Members were advised that they would be asked to approve the outline business case for the project at the January 2026 full Authority meeting. It was stressed that this was not a final decision on the project, rather just approval to move towards the next gateway.

9.3 It was noted that the Member Champion for the Training Centre project was Cllr Gareth Sandilands.

9.4 **RESOLVED to:**

- i) **Note the current progress of the Training Centre project.**

10 EMERGENCY COVER REVIEW

10.1 AM Plant provided Members with an update on the work of the Emergency Cover Review (ECR) Task and Finish subgroup. This was set up in response to the recommendation from the 20 January 2025 meeting for officers to continue to devise and test alternative solutions with representative bodies, within the agreed budget, to address emergency cover in rural locations.

10.2 The CFO noted that the original aim of the ECR had been to improve emergency cover in rural areas and that this remained the same. Retained Duty System (RDS) or on-call firefighters in these areas were being closely worked with to make sure that the best cover possible was being provided. The CFO thanked all involved for reaching an agreement and for their work in implementing the required changes.

- 10.3 It was asked if there were any statistics to demonstrate that these changes had resulted in improvement and AM Plant confirmed that whilst there were early signs of progress, it was too early to provide data to demonstrate this. It was asked that this data be made available for the January meeting, along with information on whether there had been an associated improvement to the overtime budget.
- 10.4 A Member again asked for their dissatisfaction on the lack of translation facilities for the meeting to be recorded; however, based on the unusual circumstances they were prepared to speak in English on this occasion. The Member asked if projections for Porthmadog and Dolgellau were as good as predicted in the original ECR options presented to the Authority. AM Plant responded that they were not. An improvement in availability for rural fire cover had been achieved via alternative means through consensus, but not quite to the extent of the original proposal.
- 10.5 It was asked how the weekends were covered in areas such as Dolgellau and Porthmadog following the change to nine-day fortnights. AM Plant confirmed that availability across the weekends and evenings had always been good as RDS firefighters tended to be more available outside of working hours. The introduction of the new shift pattern had therefore made a significant improvement to availability Monday to Friday during working hours.
- 10.6 It was asked what the latest position from representative bodies was and confirmed that staff and unions had engaged with the process effectively and the feedback received so far had been good. There had been some challenges in relation to issues such as childcare connected to the shift changes, but solutions for these had been identified and implemented locally.
- 10.7 Members congratulated all involved in the negotiations, acknowledged that this had been a difficult time and were pleased to see progress and that an understanding had been reached.
- 10.8 **RESOLVED to:**
- i) **Note that officers continue to work with representative bodies in social partnership following the recent signing of the Collective Agreement;**
 - ii) **Note that the Collective Agreement pilot commenced on 2 September 2025, aligning start and finish times at all wholetime stations, and the relocation of wholetime fire-fighters to Porthmadog and Dolgellau fire stations; and**
 - iii) **Note that the Collective Agreement Implementation Group (CAIG) will continue to monitor and review how the collaborative arrangement improves rural fire cover, managing any issues that arise during the period of the pilot.**

11 UPDATED FINANCIAL REGULATIONS

- 11.1 ACFO MacArthur delivered the Updated Financial Regulations paper which informed Members of the scheduled review and update of the Authority's Financial Regulations, originally approved in March 2022, and to outline the key changes introduced in the 2025 revision.
- 11.2 The Chair of the Audit Committee and the Treasurer confirmed that this paper had been previously considered by the Audit Committee, and their thanks were given to ACFO MacArthur, Elgan Roberts and the Finance team for providing these updated regulations.
- 11.3 **RESOLVED to:**
 - i) Note and approve the updated Financial Regulations.**

12 AUDIT WALES REPORT: PUTTING OUT FUTURE FIRES

- 12.1 AM Paul Kay presented the findings and recommendations of the Audit Wales July 2025 report, 'Putting out Future Fires'. This report reviewed the Authority's approach to targeting fire prevention work.
- 12.2 The positive recognition in the report was noted and the two key recommendations were highlighted.
- 12.3 A Member asked how confidential information was obtained from the Health Board in relation to high-risk individuals. AM Kay confirmed that multiple referrals were received from partner agencies daily and that oxygen suppliers also notified the Service when cylinders were delivered to new addresses.
- 12.4 It was confirmed that while over-65-year-olds were prioritised as high risk, all residents received a service if it were requested.
- 12.5 The Chair asked how the recommendations would be addressed and AM Kay responded that monthly monitoring of safe and well checks was in place, and regular performance updates to the Service Leadership Team (SLT) and the wider Authority would be given to provide feedback on performance.
- 12.6 A Member highlighted the importance of the Safe and Well checks and asked if grant funding were removed, would finances be available to continue the process. AM Kay confirmed that the Service had a good working relationship with the Welsh Government, and the lines of communication were open and regularly utilised.

12.7 A Member asked if any upskilling plans were in place to ensure that all operational staff could identify those who were vulnerable, and it was confirmed that there were.

12.8 **RESOLVED to:**

- i) **Note the findings and recommendations of the Audit Wales report;**
- ii) **Endorse the development of a targeted improvement plan addressing the two recommendations; and**
- iii) **Request a progress update in Q1 of 2026-27 on implementation actions.**

13 ANNUAL PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT 2024-25

13.1 AM Plant presented the Annual Performance Assessment (APA) for 2024/25.

13.2 A Member expressed concern over the number of false alarms recorded and asked how this was being addressed. AM Kay responded that while numbers had reduced in relation to commercial premises following the decision not to attend during the day, there was still some work required to reduce the number of residential false alarms. However, it should be recognised that there were a greater number of call handling operations provided in domestic premises although the Service was working with call providers to identify how improvements could be made.

13.3 It was asked if there were any national initiatives that might help to implement a reduction in the number of false alarms. The CFO responded that changes made following the Chief Fire and Rescue Advisor and Inspector for Wales' (CFRAIW) report on reducing false alarms in 2015 had made significant improvements, and that both Mid and West Wales and South Wales were now implementing the same changes. Collaboration with the CRRAIW continued to ensure that improvements remained ongoing.

13.4 Concern was expressed over the data in relation to malicious calls and it was asked if perpetrators were prosecuted if identified. AM Plant confirmed that the Service did prosecute but that this was on a case-by-case basis.

13.5 **RESOLVED to:**

- i) **Approve the content of the Annual Performance Assessment for the period 2024/25.**

14 BIODIVERSITY REPORT AND PLAN

- 14.1 ACFO MacArthur delivered the Biodiversity Report and Plan which sought formal approval and adoption of the Service's statutory Biodiversity and Ecosystem Resilience Report (2022-2025) and the associated Biodiversity Action Plan (2025-2028), ensuring compliance with the Environment (Wales) Act 2016.
- 14.2 A Member noted that there had been great success to date in securing grant funding for many of the Service's environmental projects and asked what the financial plans moving forward were. ACFO MacArthur confirmed that a good working relationship was in place with the Welsh Energy Service, and that further grants would be identified and applied for as and when required. Salex funding was also being utilised to install solar panels to Service premises and implement green roofs where possible.
- 14.3 ACFO MacArthur proposed that an annual report be submitted to Members to ensure that they remain sighted on progress.
- 14.4 A Member asked how HVO compared to diesel in terms of cost. Elgan Roberts responded that although there was an implementation cost with regards to installing HVO tanks, the cost of HVO was similar to diesel, although was subject to fewer fluctuations. The Service also ensured that the HVO was obtained from a sustainable source.
- 14.5 **RESOLVED to:**
- i) Approve the draft Biodiversity Report and Plan;**
 - ii) Approve the continued publication of the Report and Plan on the Service's website; and**
 - iii) Provide an annual report to Members on progress in relation to biodiversity plans.**

15 RESPONSE TO WELSH GOVERNMENT CONSULTATION ON THE REFORM OF FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITIES IN WALES 2025

- 15.1 CFO Docx presented the draft response to the Welsh Government consultation on the reform of fire and rescue authorities in Wales, based upon the feedback from Members provided at the Governance Seminars held on 29 September 2025 and 2 October 2025.
- 15.2 A Member stressed that they felt the number of Members on the current Authority was too high making it unmanageable and asked for it to also be noted that they were against the introduction of appointed Members.
- 15.3 It was felt by some that appointed Members might help to alleviate the issue of decisions being made on a parochial or political basis therefore benefitting the whole of North Wales.

15.4 It was noted that individual local authorities were taking different approaches to a response to the consultation.

15.5 **RESOLVED to:**

- i) **Notify officers of any amendments Members wish to make to the content of the draft response; and**
- ii) **Approve the draft response for submission to the Welsh Government by the consultation deadline of 24 October 2024.**

16 AUDITED STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS 2024-25

16.1 Elgan Roberts presented the Audited Statement of Accounts 2024-25 for final ratification. This report also presented the findings of the Auditor General for Wales which confirmed an unqualified audit opinion. Thanks were given to the Deputy Head of Finance and the wider finance team for their hard work in compiling these accounts, a sentiment echoed by both Audit Wales and the Treasurer.

16.2 Kieron Vickery from Audit Wales was welcomed to the meeting and highlighted key areas in the report.

16.3 **RESOLVED to:**

- i) **note the audited outturn position and performance as detailed within the 2024/25 Statement of Accounts (Appendix 1);**
- ii) **note the report of the Auditor General for Wales which confirms an unqualified audit opinion (Appendix 2);**
- iii) **note the proposed letter of representation; and**
- iv) **confirm the recommendation of approval of the final audited 2024/25 Statement of Accounts.**

17 ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT 2024-25

17.1 AM Plant presented the draft Annual Governance Statement (AGS), as required by The Accounts and Audit (Wales) Regulations 2014.

17.2 **RESOLVED TO:**

- i) **Note the final Annual Governance Statement; and**
- ii) **Agree the proposed actions for 2025/26**

18 ANNUAL EQUALITY MONITORING REPORT 2024-2025

18.1 The CFO presented to Members the draft Annual Equality Monitoring Report for 2024 – 2025, as required by the Equality Act 2010 (Statutory Duties) (Wales) Regulations 2011.

18.2 RESOLVED to:

- i) Review and approve the draft Annual Equality Monitoring Report 2024-2025.**

19 WELSH LANGUAGE ANNUAL REPORT 2024-25

19.1 Natalie Jones, Welsh Language Officer, delivered bilingually the Welsh Language Annual Report. This report confirmed the Service's compliance with Welsh Language Standards 155,161 and 167 which stated that the Authority must produce a monitoring report each financial year.

19.2 Members gave congratulations on the progress that had been made in relation to the implementation of the Welsh language across the Service, and for the quality of the report.

19.3 RESOLVED to:

- i) Approve the Welsh Language Standards Annual Monitoring Report for 2024/25 for publication on the Authority's website; and**
- ii) note the Service's intention to publicise the document as noted in Standards 155,161,167. Publication will be on the Service website and corporate social media accounts (namely Facebook and Instagram).**

20 THE AUTHORITY'S 2025/26 BUDGET REVIEW

20.1 ACFO MacArthur provided Members with an update on the revenue and capital expenditure forecast for 2025/26, as of 30 September 2025.

20.2 At this juncture, ACFO MacArthur added her thanks to the finance team for their hard work in closing the 2024/25 accounts. As a relatively small finance team, working across three financial years was extremely difficult and so being able to close off those accounts was a tangible benefit.

20.3 RESOLVED to:

- i) Note the projected revenue and capital variances for 2025/26 financial year, as detailed within the report; and**
- ii) Note the financial risks where the nature of figures forecasted in this report are prudent.**

21 BUDGET SETTING 2026-27

21.1 Dafydd Edwards, Authority Treasurer, and Elgan Roberts, Head of Finance, delivered the Budget Setting 2026-27 report which included the planning assumptions, strategic developments, and timescales underpinning the 2026-27 revenue budget setting process for the Authority.

- 21.2 It was noted that the budget for 2026-27 had been scrutinised in detail by the Member Budget Scrutiny Working Group and a further meeting of the group would be held on 23 October to examine individual business cases.
- 21.3 A Member asked whether the assumption in relation to the pay award was realistic, and Elgan responded that this had been reviewed in depth, and it was currently felt that 4% was reasonable.
- 21.4 The Treasurer confirmed that a meeting had taken place with the Section 151 Officers within each local authority to discuss the budget for 2026-27 and this meeting had been positive. A meeting had also taken place with Clwyd Pension Fund, with a further one planned for 26 November to discuss a reduction in contribution rates.
- 21.5 Members of the Budget Scrutiny Working Group were thanked for their work in scrutinising the budget for 2026-27.
- 21.6 **RESOLVED to:**
- i) **Note the planning assumptions and strategic developments informing the 2026/27 budget;**
 - ii) **Note the remit of the Budget Scrutiny Working Group established by the Audit Committee and the proposed reporting timetable;**
 - iii) **Note the proposal to provide initial budget estimates to the Audit Committee and Executive Panel at its meeting of 15 December 2025; and**
 - iv) **Note the proposal to seek approval for the 2026/27 revenue budget by the Authority at its meeting of 19 January 2026.**

22 COMMUNITY RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLEMENTATION PLAN (CRMIP) 26-27 PRE-CONSULTATION FIRST DRAFT

- 22.1 AM Plant presented the Community Risk Management Implementation Plan (CRMIP) 2026-27 Pre-Consultation First Draft which sought approval from Members to consult with the public on the Service's proposed improvement and well-being objectives.
- 22.2 AM Plant gave thanks to the Planning and Performance Team and the Heads of Department for their hard work in compiling this plan.
- 22.3 **RESOLVED to:**
- i) **Note the content of the report; and**
 - ii) **approve the draft community risk management implementation plan 2026/27 for consultation with Authority members, staff, relevant trade unions, stakeholders and the public prior to approval at the meeting of the Authority in March 2026.**

23 URGENT MATTERS

- 23.1 There were no urgent matters to consider.

Members and Officers were thanked for their participation.

Meeting closed: 12:19