

AWDURDOD TÂN AC ACHUB GOGLEDD CYMRU



NORTH WALES FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY

A meeting of the **NORTH WALES FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY** will be held on **MONDAY 19 JANUARY 2026** virtually **via Zoom** at **09:30**.

Please note, there will be a Wildfire Training Session delivered ahead of this meeting, commencing at **09:00**.

Yours faithfully,
Gareth Owens
Clerk

AGENDA

- 1. Apologies**
- 2. Declarations of Interest**
- 3. Notice of Urgent Matters**
Notice of items which, in the opinion of the Chair, should be considered at the meeting as a matter of urgency pursuant to Section 100B (4) of the Local Government Act, 1972.
- 4. Minutes of the Fire Authority Meeting held on 20 October 2025**

Standing Agenda Items

- 5. Chair's Report**
- 6. Fire Family Survey and Cultural Champions Update Report, for assurance**
- 7. Emergency Cover Review Update, for assurance**

Reports Previously Considered by Audit Committee and or Executive Panel

- 8. Final Budget Setting 2026/27, for approval**
- 9. Treasury Management Update, for assurance**

Items for Consideration

- 10. Hwb Awen Training Centre Outline Business Case, for approval**
- 11. Gender Pay Gap Report 2024/25, for approval**

Cont...

12. Strategic Equality Action Plan Annual Progress Report 2024/25, for assurance

13. Provisional Outturn 2025/26, for assurance

14. Urgent Matters

To consider any items which the Chair has decided are urgent (pursuant to Section 100B (4) of the Local Government Act, 1972) and of which substance has been declared under item 2 above.

PART II

It is recommended pursuant to Section 100A (4) of the Local Government Act, 1972 that the Press and Public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following item(s) of business because it is likely that there would be disclosed to them exempt information as defined in Paragraph(s) 12 to 18 of Part 4 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.

15. None

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

Report to	North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority
Date	19 January 2026
Lead Officer	Not applicable
Contact Officer	Members Services (members.services@northwalesfire.gov.wales)
Subject	Chair's Report



PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1 This quarterly report provides Members with information on the meetings and events attended by the Chair and Deputy Chair of the Authority in their official capacities between October and December 2025.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 2 The Chair and/or Deputy Chair have attended several meetings and events, both internally and externally on behalf of the Authority.

RECOMMENDATION

- 3 It is recommended that Members:
 - i) **Note the information provided.**

OBSERVATIONS FROM EXECUTIVE PANEL/AUDIT COMMITTEE

- 4 This report has not previously been considered.

INFORMATION

- 5 In addition to the Authority-related meetings, the Chair and Deputy Chair have met with the Chief Fire Officer (CFO) on a regular basis.
- 6 On the 2 October the Chair and the Deputy Chair attended an online meeting with other Members to discuss the FRA's response to the Welsh Government's consultation on Governance Reform of FRA's.
- 7 On the 6 October the Chair and the CFO attended an on-line meeting of the WLGA 'Fire and Rescue Panel'.

- 8 On the 9 October the Chair and the CFO attended a hybrid meeting of the Welsh Government Sub-Committee on North Wales.
- 9 On the 15 October the Deputy Chair sat on a panel to adjudicate on a Stage Three complaint.
- 10 On the 17 October the Chair attended an on-line meeting of the WLGA Joint Council for Wales. Later the same day the Chair and the Deputy Chair met with Union reps to discuss the agenda papers for the forthcoming Fire Authority meeting.
- 11 On the 6 November the Deputy Chair, together with the CFO, attended an on-line meeting of the Social Partnership Forum chaired by the Cabinet Secretary for Housing and Local Government.
- 12 On the 10 November the Deputy Chair sat on an IRDP Stage Two Pensions Adjudication Panel.
- 13 On the 14 November the Deputy Chair visited Chirk Fire Station to attend the Phoenix awards Ceremony in respect of pupils from St. Joseph's High School.
- 14 On the 17 November the Deputy Chair and the CFO attended an on-line meeting of the WLGA 'Fire and Rescue Panel'.
- 15 On the 17 November the Deputy Chair attended an online meeting with Audit Wales as part of their review into Financial Sustainability.
- 16 On the 19 November the Deputy Chair and the CFO attended an NJC online meeting as part of the consultation into national pay awards.
- 17 On the 28 November the Chair visited Amlwch Fire Station to attend the Phoenix Awards Ceremony in respect of pupils from Syr Thomas Jones School, Amlwch.
- 18 On the 5 December the Chair, Deputy Chair and the CFO attended the "Ceremony of Achievement" for new recruits at Rhyl Fire Station.
- 19 On the 6 December the Chair attended an RDS recruitment event at Beaumaris Fire Station.
- 20 On the 8 December the Chair, Deputy Chair and the CFO attended the Emergency Services Carol Service held at Bangor Cathedral.
- 21 On the 14 December the Chair attended an on-line meeting with representatives from Cardiff University who had been commissioned by Welsh Government to design a new political governance framework for SWFRS.

- 22 On the 14 December the Chair and the CFO, together with other CFO's and FRA Chairs, attended an online briefing meeting with the Cabinet Secretary.
- 23 On the 14 December the Chair attended an online meeting with National Union representatives to discuss the 2026/27 pay claim followed by an online LGS pay briefing Wales meeting with the LGA.
- 24 On the 17 December the Chair, together with EDI Champion Councillor Arwyn Roberts, attended a hybrid meeting of the Culture Improvement Board.
- 25 On the 24 December the Chair visited the Watch at Caernarfon Fire Station.
- 26 On the 25 December the Chair visited the Watch at Bangor Fire Station.

IMPLICATIONS

Wellbeing Objectives	Not relevant.
Budget	Any costs associated with meetings and events attended by members are reimbursed from the travel and subsistence budget.
Legal	No specific implications arise from approving the recommendation.
Staffing	No specific implications arise from approving the recommendation.
Equalities/Human Rights/Welsh Language	No specific implications arise from approving the recommendation.
Risks	No specific risks arise from approving the recommendation.

Report to	North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority
Date	19 January, 2026
Lead Officer	Dawn Docx, Chief Fire Officer
Contact Officers	Llinos Evans, Head of Corporate Communications Elin Hughes and Tom Weston, Culture Champions
Subject	Fire Family Survey and Cultural Champions Update Report



PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1 To provide Members with an update on the Fire Family Staff Survey results, together with an overview of recent activity and workstreams led by the Culture Champions.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 2 The Culture Champions provide regular updates on their workstreams at North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority (the Authority) meetings, Culture Improvement Board, the People and Organisational Development Committee, and the Joint Consultation and Negotiation Committee.
- 3 These updates support assurance and oversight by demonstrating progress against North Wales Fire and Rescue Service's (the Service) cultural journey, the Strategic Cultural Improvement Plan, and emerging indicators of cultural change and improvement.

OBSERVATIONS FROM EXECUTIVE PANEL/AUDIT COMMITTEE

- 4 The information in this report has not been presented previously to Authority members.

RECOMMENDATION

- 5 It is recommended that Members:
 - i) **Note the initial findings of the Fire Family Staff Survey, acknowledging both the positive progress made and the key areas requiring further focus, and support next steps; and**
 - ii) **Note the ongoing programme of improvements and support the next steps outlined in this report by the culture champions.**

BACKGROUND

Fire Family Survey Results

- 6 This was the third Fire Family Survey and achieved the highest response rate in four years at 68%. Overall results show improvement since 2023. Staff continue to express pride in their roles, teamwork, and a supportive environment. Eighty-three percent feel proud to work for the Service and would recommend it as a workplace. Engagement is strong at 81%, and 85% of staff know how their work contributes to the Service's aims. Governance improved to 73%, and reward saw one of the biggest uplifts, reaching 63%. The top five words used to describe culture were: friendly, supportive, improving, inclusive, and positive.
- 7 These results confirm that staff remain committed, value their work, and feel increasingly recognised. However, the pace of change has not met everyone's expectations. While staff feel more listened to, confidence is affected by a perceived lack of follow-up when issues are raised. Leadership scored 75% positive or neutral, but concerns remain about whether action will be taken and whether leaders are connected to frontline realities. Enablement stands at 57%, highlighting the need for clearer communication, stronger support, and consistent expectations. Some staff groups scored lower than others, so targeted support will be important.

Key Themes from Comments:

- 8 Cultural progress is noted, with managers seen as more approachable and blame culture reduced. Staff value crew-level pride, community impact, and improved station-based training.
- 9 Positive initiatives include Culture Champions, EDI training, Speak Up routes, and welfare support. Challenges remain around leadership trust and accountability, promotion fairness, communication, bullying, rostering flexibility, and training consistency.
- 10 The Service Leadership Team, the Fire Family Working Group, and middle managers received the People Insight presentation ahead of the all-staff drop-in session held on 9 December 2025. Approximately 75 staff members attended, with actual participation likely higher as some groups joined collectively using a single device.

Next Steps:

- 11 Further survey statistics will be shared in the New Year. Focus will be on building confidence by improving communication, increasing trust in leadership, and ensuring actions are delivered fairly. The Fire Family Working Group will help shape action plans, with updates shared via Weekly Brief and Hwb Tân.

Recent Culture Champions Activities

- 12 The Culture Champions have engaged with a range of committees and trade union representatives, gaining oversight of work across the Service and gathering workforce feedback to inform cultural improvement. This engagement supports alignment with the Cultural Action Plan and embeds cultural considerations within decision making. Further engagement with staff and key stakeholders will continue through visits, staff networks, working groups and ongoing committee attendance.
- 13 Following a series of discussions, the Welsh Government has confirmed funding for several initiatives that will strengthen the Service's cultural development, align with ongoing improvement activity, and support in addressing recommendations of the Crest Report.
- 14 A revised draft of the Strategic Cultural Improvement Plan was approved for publication at December's Culture Improvement Board.
- 15 Development of a draft implementation plan to support the embedding of the Core Code of Ethics across the Service is underway. This workstream is being considered for inclusion within the Fire Family Survey Working Group to support delivery and oversight, particularly in response to themes emerging from the recent survey findings.
- 16 The 'Our Culture' page on the Hwb has been refreshed, incorporating a revised introduction and the introduction of a monthly newsfeed highlighting ongoing cultural improvement workstreams. Updates are also being shared via the weekly brief to support improved communication and staff engagement.
- 17 The Culture Champions are supporting Human Resources colleagues in the development of the Workforce Representation Strategy. This work includes consultation with staff networks and trade union representatives to ensure the strategy reflects diverse perspectives and addresses barriers to representation, progression, and inclusion.

- 18 Work has commenced to explore how key performance indicators (KPIs) can support the effective tracking of cultural progress against the Crest Report recommendations. This includes consideration of the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) culture dashboard methodology, which is designed to support services in monitoring and understanding their organisational culture and how it changes over time. The methodology aims to help identify key issues and successful practices, enable informed conversations between staff and leadership on values, culture, fairness, ethics and diversity, and support evidence-based action.
- 19 The Culture Champions attended the Asian Fire Service Association (AFSA) Conference hosted by London Fire Brigade at London Heathrow on 26–27 November. The conference focused on themes of trust, leadership, organisational culture, and community across fire and rescue services. Attendance provided the opportunity to engage with colleagues nationally, gather learning on effective cultural improvement practice, and strengthen relationships with partner organisations undertaking similar work. Key insights gained will inform ongoing culture-related initiatives within the Service.
- 20 The Culture Champions have also participated in research being undertaken by the University of South Wales examining culture and conduct within public services across Wales. This included attendance at a 10Kv consultation event in North Wales alongside representatives from other public services. Outputs from this research will directly inform the development of an Innovation Plan for the Welsh Government and wider public sector bodies.
- 21 The Culture Champions chaired an initial meeting on 18 December 2025 with individuals in comparable roles from Fire and Rescue Services, Police Forces and the Ambulance Service across Wales. With this forum now established, regular future engagement is planned to share learning, monitor progress, identify opportunities for collaboration, and exchange best practice in relation to cultural improvement across Wales.

CONCLUSION

- 22 The programme of work now requires ongoing support to ensure these improvements are embedded, trusted, and sustainable.

IMPLICATIONS

Well-being Objectives	Cultural improvement activity contributes to a healthy, motivated workforce and supports long-term organisational sustainability.
Budget	Welsh Government funding has been confirmed to support several cultural improvement initiatives aligned to the Crest Report recommendations. Further activity is being delivered within existing budgets.
Legal	Work to embed the Core Code of Ethics and respond to the Crest Report recommendations strengthens organisational assurance and mitigates legal and reputational risk.
Staffing	Survey findings and engagement activity highlight strong workforce commitment, while identifying areas requiring targeted support. Ongoing cultural improvement work aims to enhance trust, leadership confidence, enablement, and fair treatment, supporting staff retention, wellbeing and workforce effectiveness.
Equalities/ Human Rights/ Welsh Language	Cultural improvement activity promotes engagement with staff, fairness, inclusion and dignity at work. Communication activity, including use of Hwb Tân, continues to reflect Welsh language standards.
Risks	Failure to maintain momentum or demonstrate clear follow-through on staff feedback may impact trust, engagement and confidence in leadership.

Report to	North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority
Date	19 January 2026
Lead Officer	Anthony Jones, Assistant Chief Fire Officer
Contact Officer	Mike Plant, Head of Planning, Performance and Transformation
Subject	Emergency Cover Review



PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1 To provide Members of the North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority (the Authority) with an update on the work of the Emergency Cover Review (ECR) working group 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.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 2 Since April 2025, the ECR group has been replaced with the "Collective Agreement Implementation Group" (CAIG) following the completion and sign-off of a collective agreement by the CFO and FBU, at regional and national levels.
- 3 The Collective Agreement pilot went fully live on 1 January 2026. The CAIG continues to exist and to consist of FBU officials and officers from the transformation team but has extended to include personnel from most functions to ensure that the pilot phase is fully supported.
- 4 The CAIG continues to work together to implement the agreement and monitor and review the pilot measures in place to improve the self-resilience within the current duty system across the eight Wholetime/Day Crewed stations allowing a more effective and efficient model of emergency cover across the whole of North Wales.
- 5 The CAIG is now in the monitor and review phase and is gathering data from both 1 September 2025 when daytime rural fire cover was introduced into Porthmadog and Dolgellau, and the 1 January 2026 when the pilot became fully functional. This data will be presented to the Authority in future meetings.

OBSERVATIONS FROM EXECUTIVE PANEL/AUDIT COMMITTEE

- 6 This report has not previously been presented to Executive Panel or Audit Committee.

RECOMMENDATION

- 7 It is recommended that Members:
- i) **Note that officers have continued to work with representative bodies in social partnership to develop a way forward with the ECR.**
 - ii) **Note that the collective agreement pilot signed off by the CFO and the Fire Brigades Union is now in full operation from 1st January 2026**
 - iii) **Note that the collective agreement is being continually monitored and reviewed, and further data will be presented on its performance.**

BACKGROUND

- 8 During the period of July to September 2023 the Authority consulted the public on three viable options for the future delivery on its emergency response to the communities of North Wales. A decision was taken by the Authority in December 2023 not to implement any of the proposals at that time but to continue to work on variations to the proposals. The proposals in the consultation do, however, remain live.
- 9 A Task and Finish Group comprising of 16 colleagues working at various levels, stations, and departments throughout North Wales Fire and Rescue Service (the Service), including representatives of the Fire Brigades Union (FBU) met on 12 occasions between February and November 2024, during which time they discussed and researched several emergency response models.
- 10 Several options were scoped by the Task and Finish Group including models for rostering staff differently to release the posts required to base them in additional locations thus supporting the provision of a more efficient and effective emergency cover model. This included how the current rostering arrangements could be more self-resilient. The basis for the Collective Agreement is therefore not a new idea but one that has been revisited by the subgroup before proposals from the public consultation are reconsidered.

- 11 At its meeting on 28 April 2025, the Authority reaffirmed its commitment to providing a more effective and efficient emergency cover model across the whole of North Wales to address the risks identified during the emergency cover review that recognised the challenges of providing emergency cover in rural areas and how the use of resources needed to be adapted with no increase to the budget.

INFORMATION

- 12 The Collective Agreement has amended the start and finish times for all 24hr and Day-Crewed stations. This commenced on 1 September 2025, supported by agreed amendments to leave policies and procedures. The first full 12-month leave year pilot of an 08:00 start with a 10-hour day shift started on 1 January 2026 and will run for 24 months.
- 13 An internal memorandum was sent to all operational personnel in June 2025 detailing the changes to start and finish times in line with social partnership principles to allow personnel as much notice as possible to make any necessary arrangements. A central repository of information and guidance documents including frequently asked questions has been created by the CAIG on the Service Intranet, Hwb, for the benefit of all affected personnel.
- 14 The corporate planning and transformation teams are collating data as described above to present on the performance of the pilot at future Authority meetings. Early indications are that rural fire cover has improved since the partial launch of the pilot on 1 September 2025.
- 15 We have received a number of flexible working requests from individuals since the changes to the start times. These applications are being managed locally in an informal manner wherever possible.
- 16 Members will be pleased to note that risk critical work is already being undertaken by the crews in Porthmadog and Dolgellau, which has been promoted throughout the service by our corporate communications team. This work includes site specific risk information gathering at the Dwyrdd estuary high voltage cable project in Penrhyndeudraeth South Gwynedd, and targeted visits to higher risk individuals for safe and well checks in Dolgellau.

IMPLICATIONS

Well-being Objectives	The ECR outcomes must meet the Authority's obligations under the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015.
Budget	Any solution must be within the approved budget.
Legal	Na
Staffing	The Service has continued to work with staff and their representative bodies and will continue to do so. Regular updates are provided at the JCNC and via the Weekly Brief as well as via visits to stations by officers.
Equalities/Human Rights/ Welsh Language	The Service's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Officer engaged with EDI groups throughout the consultation. The ECR is within the Community Risk Management Implementation Plan (CRMIP) with feedback also gathered on this.
Risks	The ECR and the work of the resultant CAIG seeks to reduce the risks of not being able to respond to emergencies effectively and efficiently in the communities of North Wales.

Report to	North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority
Date	19 January 2026
Lead Officer	Helen MacArthur, Assistant Chief Fire Officer
Contact Officer	Elgan Roberts, Head of Finance and Procurement
Subject	Budget Setting 2026/27



PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1 To provide Members with the financial planning assessment to set a balanced budget for 2026/27 and seek approval to communicate the final agreed levy to constituent local authorities.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 2 North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority (the Authority) is required to confirm the financial levy for 2026/27 to constituent local authorities by 15 February 2026. To achieve this, the budget setting process for 2026/27 was overseen by the member led Budget Setting Working Group and the draft budget was considered by the Executive Panel and the Audit Committee at the meetings held on 15 December 2025 which confirmed the planning assessment for a revenue budget of £54.375m. In addition, a capital plan of £6.661m was approved. To achieve a balanced position, certain non-essential projects and capital schemes have been reprofiled into 2027/28.
- 3 The proposed final levy for the constituent local authorities will be £54.1m following the use of reserves for non-recurring expenditure. This represents a year-on-year increase of 4.47% which is in line with the Welsh Government settlement to local authorities of 4.5%.

OBSERVATIONS FROM COMMITTEES/GROUPS

- 4 The budget setting process has been subject to oversight and scrutiny by the member led Budget Scrutiny Working Group which met on five occasions between June – November 2025. The planning assumptions and draft revenue and capital budgets were presented and endorsed by the Executive Panel and the Audit Committee at the meetings held on 15th December 2025.

RECOMMENDATIONS

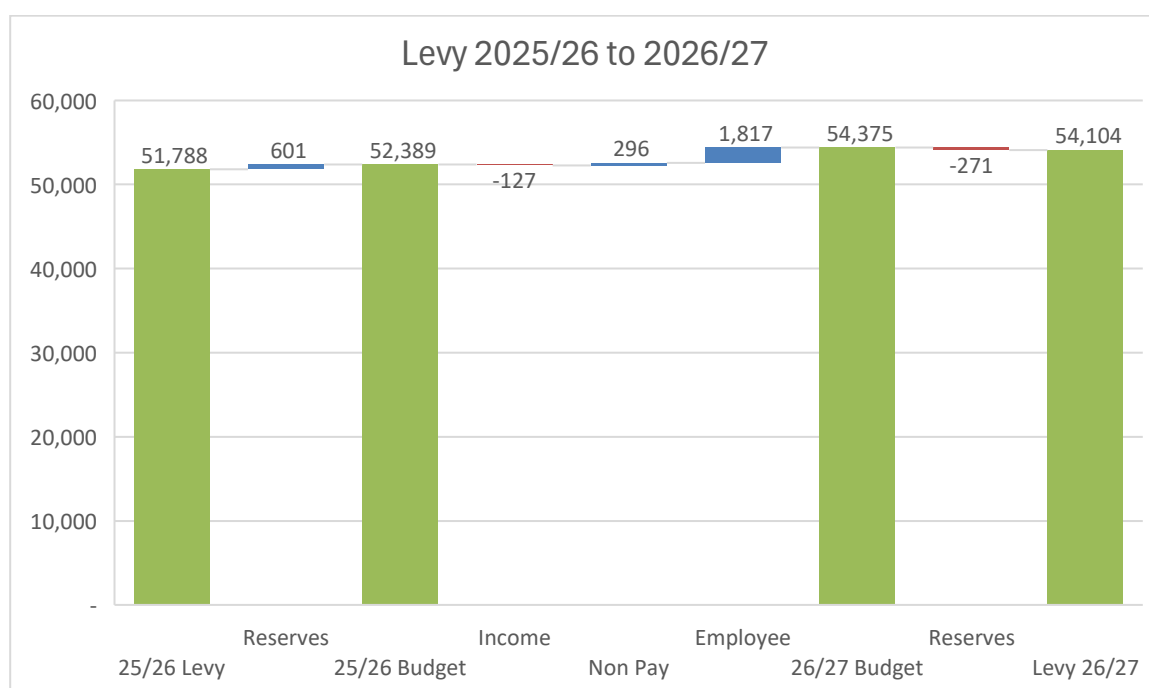
- 5 It is recommended that Members:
- i) **Endorse the findings of the Budget Scrutiny Working Group, including the planning assumptions being used to develop the revenue budget for 2026/27;**
 - ii) **Approve the current financial planning assessment of a revenue budget requirement of £54.375m and capital budget of £6.661m for 2026/27;**
 - iii) **Approve the proposal to utilise £0.271m of reserves for 2026/27; and**
 - iv) **Approve the communication of the final financial levy of £54.104m from the constituent local authorities.**

BACKGROUND

- 6 Each year the Authority is required to set a balanced revenue budget which must be approved by the full Authority. The indicative financial levy must be communicated to constituent local authorities by 31 December each year and the final levy confirmed by the 15 February before the commencement of the financial year. To achieve these timescales, the 2026/27 proposed revenue and capital budgets will be presented to the Authority at its meeting on 19 January 2026.
- 7 The Chartered Institute of Public Finance (CIPFA) requires that organisations have financial plans which demonstrate how expenditure will be funded over the short and medium term. The Authority's financial sustainability is, therefore, underpinned by knowledge and understanding of the key cost drivers and evaluation of risks and uncertainties.
- 8 Following the ECR consultation, work is ongoing to improve rural availability; however, savings will not be realised as options involving cash releasing savings were not approved by the Authority. The Nucleus Crewing pilot at Porthmadog and Dolgellau will be monitored during 2026/27.
- 9 The process has been overseen by the Budget Scrutiny Working Group (the Group) which was established to provide scrutiny of the budget setting process.
- 10 As part of the financial planning process, a number of planned investments have been deferred to 2027/28 to manage affordability and maintain compliance with statutory requirements.

INFORMATION

- 11 The Group was established by the Authority with representation from each constituent local authority. It has convened on five occasions to review all aspects of the North Wales Fire and Rescue Service's (the Service) expenditure. These meetings focused on key areas, including direct pay costs, non-pay expenditure, capital financing, interest, and lease arrangements.
- 12 Detailed budget planning has been conducted in line with the key planning assumptions, risks, and uncertainties outlined in [Appendix 1](#).
- 13 The initial detailed budget planning identified additional unavoidable pressures, which have since been addressed through the efforts of the Group. The final draft assessment establishes a budget requirement of £54.375m. After utilising £0.271m from reserves, the levy requirement for 2026/27 is £54.104m, representing a 4% gross increase in the local authority levy.



- 14 A draft breakdown of the levy requirement of £54.104m by each constituent local authority is set out within [Appendix 2](#).
- 15 The table below confirms reductions of £1.349m in the budget requirement identified through the work of the Group during the year.

£'m	2025/26	2026/27 Draft 1	2026/27 Draft 2	2026/27 Proposed Budget	Changes via Budget Scrutiny
Employees	36.915	39.152	38.844	38.732	0.420
Non-Pay	16.513	17.700	17.167	16.810	0.890
Income	-1.039	-1.128	-1.211	-1.166	0.038
Total	52.389	55.724	54.800	54.375	1.348

- 16 Employee costs are expected to increase from £36.915m in 2025/26 to £38.732m in 2026/27, representing a year-on-year rise of 4.9%. This figure includes an allocation of £0.352m to expand establishment capacity, in accordance with recommendations from the Fire Advisor for Wales and to ensure compliance with legislative requirements. Excluding these additional costs, the underlying year-on-year increase is 4%.
- 17 Provisions have been made to support the continued expansion of the Retained Duty System (RDS), thereby enhancing operational resilience. The annual cost of £0.163m includes funding for the recruitment of 15 additional posts, ensuring that response capacity and resilience are maintained.
- 18 Additional financial pressures resulting from the full-year impact of recruitment in 2025/26, staff progression from development to competent pay, and job evaluation have been mitigated through savings and reductions in employer contributions to the Local Government Pension Scheme.
- 19 The budget planning process incorporates key risks and assumptions, most notably that pay awards are based on an assumed inflation rate of 3.8%. Any settlement exceeding this rate will result in additional cost pressures beyond the current budget proposal. In such cases, internal measures will be implemented to mitigate the impact in the short term, including the use of the general fund and relevant earmarked reserves.
- 20 Non-pay costs are projected to increase from £12.012m in 2025/26 to a revised baseline of £12.309m for 2026/27. The utilisation of £0.271m of reserves for one-off expenditure reduces the total levy impact to £12.039m. The in-year increase includes the reclassification of certain capital expenditure as revenue following an internal review to ensure compliance with the CIPFA standards.

- 21 Income is projected to rise from £1.039m in 2025/26 to £1.166m in 2026/27. This additional income offsets pay and non-pay pressures by £0.082m and includes budgets for the sale of vehicles (£0.100m) and interest expected on investments (£0.037m). These gains are partially offset by a reduction of £0.092m in known grant funding and Service Level Agreements (SLAs).
- 22 A capital allocation of £6.661m is proposed for 2026/27; however, schemes will only progress once all associated business cases have been fully developed and subjected to rigorous scrutiny. Capital financing costs are forecast to remain stable at £4.501m, reflecting reductions in the Minimum Revenue Provision (£0.027m) and lease costs (£0.076m). These savings are offset by a £0.060m provision for Capital Expenditure from Revenue Account (CERA) and an increase in interest payable, driven by the reprofiling of the loan book towards longer-term borrowing to provide certainty and continuity.

FURTHER WORK

- 23 Business cases for new capital and non-pay funding will undergo further internal scrutiny to ensure they align with the organisation's strategic objectives, effectively mitigate risks, and comply with the principles of the Well-being of Future Generations Act 2015. This process will provide assurance that proposed investments contribute to long-term sustainability, deliver value for money, and support the wider goals of economic, environmental, and social well-being.
- 24 The draft financial planning assessment will be subject to further refinement and updated in the final assessment presented to the Authority at its meeting on 19 January 2026.
- 25 Treasury Management Strategy reports for 2026/27 are currently in development. Following consideration and approval by the Finance and Procurement Committee, these reports will be submitted to the Authority for scrutiny and endorsement at the Audit Committee in March, with final approval scheduled at the Fire Authority meeting on 20 April 2026.

IMPLICATIONS

Wellbeing Objectives	The proposals support the Authority's Improvement and Wellbeing Objectives by ensuring financial sustainability and service resilience.
Budget	The planning assessment confirms a budget requirement of £54.375m, with £0.271m of reserves applied to reduce the levy impact. The current assessment reflects the reprofiling of some expenditure into 2027/28 to mitigate immediate cost pressures and ensure sustainability.
Legal	The Authority must set a balanced budget in compliance with statutory requirements and CIPFA guidance.
Staffing	Staffing costs represent over 70% of total expenditure. Key risks include pay award uncertainty, recruitment challenges for retained duty staff, and maintaining corporate resilience.
Equalities/Human Rights/Welsh Language	These issues will be factored into budget setting proposals.
Risks	Principal risks and uncertainties are detailed in Appendix 1.

Appendix 1
Summary of planning assumptions and risks

Heading	Planning assumptions used in budget setting	Risks/Uncertainties
Employee costs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staffing budgets based on existing service delivery models and outcomes of the Emergency Cover Review (2023). Retained Duty System (RDS) budget assumes headcount continuation, not full establishment (approx. additional £3m if fully resourced). Additional RDS recruitment capped at 15 posts (was 30 in 2024/25). Pay award planning assumption: 3.8% inflation for all staff groups. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The National Joint Council (NJC) has not yet reached agreement on the firefighter pay award for 2026/27. The budget planning assumes normal levels of activity. If spare conditions occur budget pressures will be experienced. The working assumption is that the General Fund would be utilised in the first instance. Recruitment challenges for RDS and high retirement levels could increase costs. Legal challenges on pension remedy (O'Brien/Matthews 2) may require additional administrative funding.


Heading	Planning assumptions used in budget setting	Risks/Uncertainties
Non-Pay	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Budgets formulated using zero-based approach; new expenditure over £10k requires a business case. • Inflationary pressures where known are factored into contracts and supply chain costs. • Unavoidable costs associated with industry specific health and safety matters have been included within the non-pay budget. These include costs associated with the training of operational firefighters and the management of contaminants. • One off non-pay expenditure of £271k allocated to be funded through utilisation of reserves. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Whilst the Service continues to review non-pay costs and strives to manage cost pressures within the planned budget this remains an area of risk and uncertainty. In particular, it has been noted that delays in the delivery of goods or services have impacted on the time profiles of expenditure. • Although cost inflation is generally more manageable than in recent years it is noted that some areas of concern remain. This includes increases in licences associated with software including business critical systems and insurance cost. • The cost of gas and electricity has been a known cost pressure since 2022/23 due to global cost pressures. The position appears to have stabilised and the budget for 2026/27 is predicated on best estimates at this time. However, volatility in the market continues and this is carefully managed throughout the financial year with the current contract due to expire during 2026/27.

Heading	Planning assumptions used in budget setting	Risks/Uncertainties
Capital Financing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The capital financing requirement for 2026/267 includes the revenue charge for the minimum revenue provision for existing assets and an estimate of the interest charges arising from borrowing. These costs are influenced by historical capital expenditure, the need to borrow for the 2026/27 capital programme and the impact of interest rate increases when re-financing maturing loans. • The initial planning assessment assumes that all future borrowing will be at the prevailing PWLB rate at the time of budget setting, currently estimated at 4.6%. The Authority receives independent advice and guidance on this matter from Arlingclose, a specialist advisory company. • The capital plan includes potential costs associated with business cases submitted by each Head of Department. This includes some provision for initial costs associated with the Training Centre Project to enable a detailed business case and funding model to be developed. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The increase in interest rates in recent years is a key risk area and is exacerbated as a number of loans require refinancing during the 2026/27 financial year. Financial modelling undertaken to assess the affordability of all proposals during the budget setting process. • The timing of any costs associated with a new training centre are unknown at this stage as the business case has not been considered by the Authority. Although it is not anticipated that the final business case and funding options will not be presented for approval until 2027 provision for costs associated with detailed planning applications will be included in the initial budget estimates.
Income	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Income budgets have been reviewed and set in line with previous years, subject to inflationary increases. • Welsh Government grant assumes that remaining Welsh Government grant funding will be received at current levels. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No specific risks have been identified over and above the grant income from the Welsh Government for which inflationary uplifts are not anticipated. • Projected income streams (e.g., asset sales) are not guaranteed.

Appendix 2

Draft financial levy by local authority

Authority	ONS Population Estimate	2026/27 Budget £	2026/27 Utilisation of Reserves £	2026/27 Levy £	Increase in Levy %
Anglesey Council	69,097	5,389,578	-26,861	5,362,717	3.41%
Gwynedd Council	120,813	9,423,435	-46,965	9,376,470	5.13%
Conwy County Borough Council	114,891	8,961,518	-44,663	8,916,855	4.14%
Denbighshire County Council	98,202	7,659,773	-38,176	7,621,598	4.82%
Flintshire County Council	155,867	12,157,653	-60,593	12,097,061	3.74%
Wrexham County Borough Council	138,245	10,783,134	-53,742	10,729,392	5.30%
Total	697,115	54,375,092	-271,000	54,104,092	4.47%

Report to	North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority	
Date	19 January 2026	
Lead Officer	Helen MacArthur, Assistant Chief Fire Officer	
Contact Officer	Elgan Roberts, Head of Finance and Procurement	
Subject	Treasury Management Report Q2 2025/26	

PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1 The purpose of this report is to provide Members of the North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority (the Authority) with an update on the treasury management activity and compliance with the treasury management prudential indicators for the period 1 June 2025 – 30 September 2025.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 2 In December 2003, the Authority adopted the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy's *Treasury Management in the Public Services: Code of Practice (2021)* (the CIPFA Code) which requires the Authority to approve, as a minimum, treasury management semi-annual and annual outturn reports.
- 3 The CIPFA Code also included a new requirement for quarterly reporting of the treasury management indicators from April 2023. The non-treasury prudential indicators are incorporated in the Authority's normal revenue and capital monitoring report.
- 4 The Authority's treasury management strategy for 2025/26 was approved at a meeting on 28 April 2025. As the Authority borrows and invests significant sums of money there are financial risks that need to be considered, including the loss of invested funds and the revenue effect of changing interest rates. The successful identification, monitoring and control of risk remains central to the Authority's treasury management strategy.
- 5 During the year, the Authority's borrowing and investments remained well within the limits originally set. There were no new defaults by banks in which the Authority deposited money.

OBSERVATIONS FROM AUDIT COMMITTEE

- 6 The Audit Committee received and endorsed the Treasury Management Report at its meeting of 15 December 2025.

RECOMMENDATIONS

7 Members are asked to:

- i) **note the treasury management activities and prudential indicators for the period 1 June 2025 to 30 September 2025.**

EXTERNAL CONTEXT

- 8 UK headline Consumer Price Index (CPI) increased over the period, rising from 2.6% in March to 3.8% in August, still well above the Bank of England's 2% target. Core Inflation also rose, from 3.4% to 3.6% over the same period, albeit the August reading was down % from 3.8% the previous month. Services inflation also fell from July to August, to 4.7% from 5%.
- 9 The BoE's Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) cut Bank Rate to 4.0% in August.
- 10 The Authority's treasury adviser maintained its central view that Bank Rate would cut further as the BOE focused on weak GDP growth more than higher inflation. One more cut is currently expected during 2025/26, taking Bank Rate to 3.75%.

LOCAL CONTEXT

- 11 On 30 September 2025, the Authority had net borrowing of £15.32m arising from capital expenditure.
- 12 The underlying need to borrow for capital purposes is measured by the Capital Financing Requirement (CFR), while balance sheet resources are the underlying resources available for investment. These factors are summarised in [Table 1](#) below.
- 13 Table 1 confirms that the Authority's net borrowings were below the Capital Financing Requirement (CFR).

Table 1: Balance Sheet Summary

	31.03.25 Actual £m	30.09.25 Actual £m
General Fund CFR	31.01	24.83
External borrowing	-19.07	-15.32
Internal borrowing	11.94	9.51
Less: Balance sheet resources	-14.46	-14.46
Less: New Investments	2.52	4.95
New borrowing	0.00	0.00

- 14 The treasury management position as of 30 September and the change over the six months is shown in [Table 2](#) below.

Table 2: Treasury Management Summary

	31.3.25 Balance	Movement	30.09.25 Balance	30.09.25 Rate
	£m	£m	£m	%
Long-term borrowing	8.46	1.80	10.26	2.81 - 4.80
Short-term borrowing	10.61	-5.55	5.06	1.07 – 4.90
Total borrowing	19.07	-3.75	15.32	
Short-term investments	0.00	-2.70	-2.70	3.95 – 4.22
Cash and cash equivalents	-2.52	0.27	-2.25	3.25-- 4.34
Total investments	-2.52	-2.43	-4.95	
Net borrowing	16.55	-6.18	10.37	

BORROWING

- 15 CIPFA's 2021 Prudential Code outlines that local authorities must not borrow to invest with the primary objective being financial return. It is not prudent for local authorities to make any investment or spending decision that will increase the capital financing requirement requiring new borrowing, unless directly and primarily related to the functions of the Authority.
- 16 The Authority has not invested in assets for financial return, and all expenditure is related to the discharge of the Authority's functions.

BORROWING STRATEGY AND ACTIVITY

- 17 As outlined in the treasury strategy, the Authority's main objective when borrowing has been to adopt a low-risk strategy balancing low interest costs and achieving cost certainty over the period for which funds are required. The flexibility to renegotiate loans should the Authority's long-term plans change is a secondary objective. The Authority's borrowing strategy continues to address the key issue of affordability without compromising the longer-term stability of the debt portfolio.
- 18 The cost of short-term borrowing from other authorities has been similar to Base Rate during the period at 4.0% to 4.5%.
- 19 The PWLB certainty rate for 10-year maturity loans was 5.38% at the beginning of the period and 5.53% at the end. The lowest available 10-year maturity rate was 5.17% and the highest was 5.62%. Rates for 20-year maturity loans ranged from 5.71% to 6.30% during the period, and 50-year maturity loans from 5.46% to 6.14%.

- 20 As of 30 September 2025, the Authority held £15.32m of loans, a decrease of £3.75m compared to 31 March 2025. A summary of outstanding loans as of 30 September is provided in [Table 3A](#) below.

Table 3A: Borrowing Position

	31.3.25 Balance £m	Net Movement £m	30.09.25 Balance £m	30.09.25 Weighted Average Rate %	30.09.25 Weighted Average Maturity (years)
Public Works Loan Board	14.073	1.246	15.319	3.510	6.470
Local authorities (short-term)	5.00	-5.00	0.000	0.000	0.000
Total borrowing	19.07	-3.75	15.319		

- 21 The Authority took out a new £5M short-term local authority loan in December 24 which was repaid in August 25. All other short-term loans are held with the PWLB. Further borrowing is not required until November, however, if there is a sudden movement in the market with improved rates this will be utilised upon advised from out treasury advisors Arlingclose.

Table 3B: Long-dated Loans borrowed

	Amount £m	Rate %	Period (Years)
PWLB Maturity Loan	2.00	4.80	27
PWLB EIP Loan	0.59	3.09	12
PWLB EIP Loan	4.17	3.91	15
Total borrowing	6.76		

- 22 The Authority's borrowing decisions are not predicated on any one outcome for interest rates and seeks to maintain a balanced portfolio of short- and long-term borrowing.

TREASURY INVESTMENT ACTIVITY

- 23 CIPFA published a revised Treasury Management in the Public Services Code of Practice and Cross-Sectoral Guidance Notes on 20 December 2021. These define treasury management investments as investments that arise from the organisation's cash flows or treasury risk management activity that ultimately represents balances that need to be invested until the cash is required for use in the course of business.

- 24 The Authority holds invested funds, representing income received in advance of expenditure plus balances and reserves held. During the six months, the Authority's investment balances ranged between £1.03m and £13.73m. The investment position is shown in [Table 4](#) below.

Table 4: Treasury Investment Position

	31.3.25		30.09.25	30.09.25	30.09.25
	Balance	Net Movement	Balance	Income Return	Weighted Average Maturity
	£m	£m	£m	%	days
Banks & building societies	2.52	-0.27	2.25	3.25-4.34	On call
Fixed Term		0.00	0.00		
Central Government		2.70	2.70	3.95	6
Total investments	2.52	7.43	9.95		

- 25 Both the CIPFA Code and government guidance require the Authority to invest its funds prudently, and to have regard to the security and liquidity of its treasury investments before seeking the optimum rate of return, or yield. The Authority's objective when investing money is to strike an appropriate balance between risk and return, minimising the risk of incurring losses from defaults and the risk of receiving unsuitably low investment income.
- 26 As demonstrated by the liability benchmark in this report, the Authority expects to be a long-term borrower and new treasury investments are therefore primarily made to manage day-to-day cash flows using short-term low risk instruments.
- 27 Bank Rate reduced from 4.5% to 4.25% in May, followed by a further reduction to 4.00% in August 2025. Short term interest rates have largely followed these levels. The rates on DMADF deposits ranged between 3.95% and 4.45% and money market rates between 3.25% and 4.34%.

COMPLIANCE

- 28 All treasury management activities undertaken during the year complied with the principles in the Treasury Management Code and the Authority's approved Treasury Management Strategy. North Wales Fire and Rescue Service (the Service) hold two call accounts that are used to place short term deposits, with Lloyds Bank and Barclays Bank. The interest rates being offered on treasury deposits tend to be more favourable; however, deposits were held with Lloyd and Barclays during the period due to the liquidity requirement for purchasing the land for the new training centre.

- 29 The Authority also utilises its Debt Management Office (DMO) account, as the Treasury Management Strategy allows for unlimited funds to be placed with the DMO.
- 30 Compliance with specific investment limits is demonstrated in [Table 5](#) below.

Table 5: Investment Limits

Institution	Description	Limit	30.09.25 Actual	Complied? Yes/No
Banks	All UK banks and their subsidiaries that have good ratings (Fitch or equivalent). This is currently defined as long term (BBB)	£5m	£2.25m	yes
Central Government	Debt Management Office (DMO)	Unlimited	£2.70m	yes
Money Market Funds (MMF)	Only in conjunction with advice for Arlingclose	£1m per fund	0	yes
Local Authorities	All except those subject to limitation of council tax and precepts under Part 1 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992	£2m	0	yes
Building Societies	Building societies with a rating (as for the banking sector)	£2m	0	yes
Building Societies (Assets £1bn)	Building societies without a rating but with assets of £1billion or more	£2m/9 months	0	yes

- 31 Compliance with the Authorised Limit and Operational Boundary for external debt is demonstrated in [Table 6](#) below.

Table 6: Debt and the Authorised Limit and Operational Boundary

	30.09.25 Actual £m	2025/26 Operational Boundary £m	2025/26 Authorised Limit £m	Complied?
Borrowing	15.32	28.99	30.99	Yes
Total debt	15.32	28.99	30.99	

- 32 Since the operational boundary is a management tool for in-year monitoring there may be occasions when actual borrowing exceeds this target. This may be due to variations in cash flow and short-term breaches would not count as a compliance failure.

TREASURY MANAGEMENT INDICATORS

- 33 As required by the 2021 CIPFA Treasury Management Code, the Authority monitors and measures the following treasury management prudential indicators.

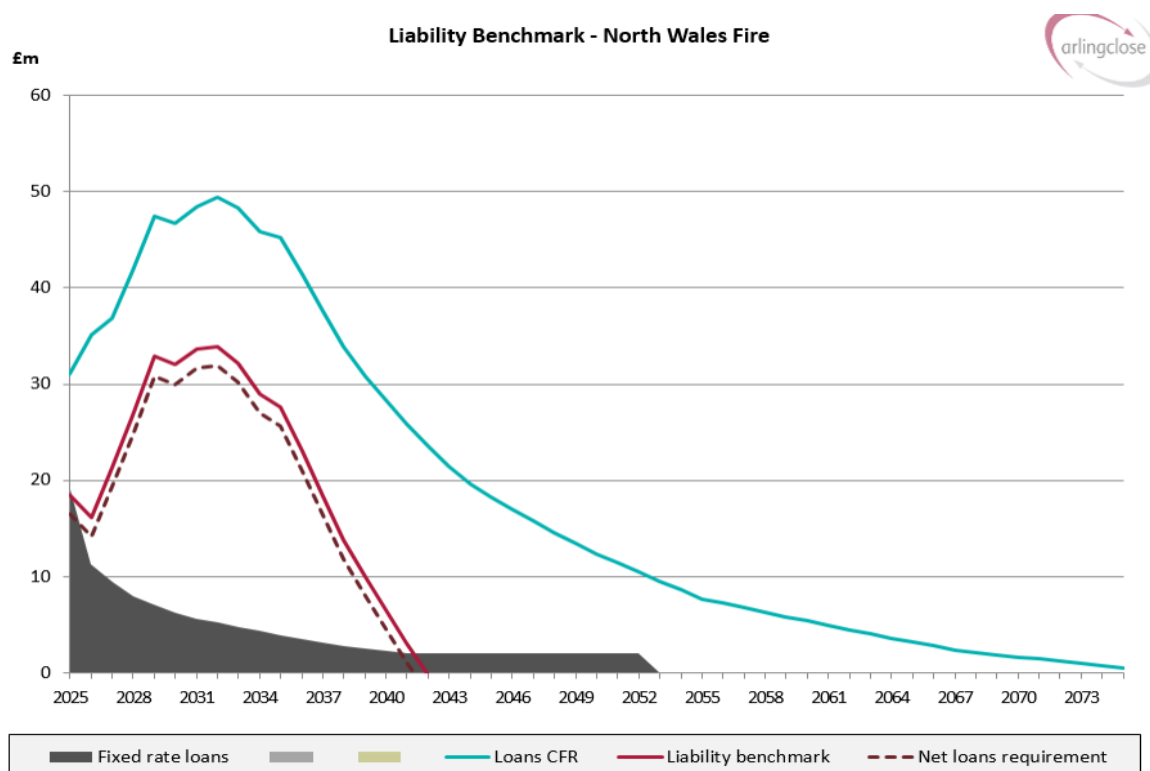
Liability Benchmark

- 34 This new indicator compares the Authority's actual existing borrowing against a liability benchmark that has been calculated to show the lowest risk level of borrowing. The liability benchmark is an important tool to help establish whether the Authority is likely to be a long-term borrower or long-term investor in the future and so shape its strategic focus and decision making.
- 35 The indicator represents an estimate of the cumulative amount of external borrowing the Authority must hold to fund its current capital and revenue plans while keeping treasury investments at the minimum level of £2.0m required to manage day-to-day cash flow.

	31.03.25 Actual £m	30.09.25 Actual £m	31.03.26 Forecast £m	31.03.27 Forecast £m
Loans CFR	31.01	24.83	35.20	36.90
Less: Balance sheet resources	-14.46	-14.46	-21.00	-17.50
Net loans requirement	16.55	10.37	14.20	19.40
Plus: Liquidity allowance	2.00	2.00	2.00	2.00
Liability benchmark	18.55	12.37	16.20	21.40
Existing borrowing	-19.07	-15.32	-9.40	-7.90

- 36 The above forecast does not include any costs for the proposed training centre.
- 37 Following on from the medium-term forecast above, the long-term liability benchmark assumes capital expenditure funded by borrowing of £4m - £6m a year, minimum revenue provision on new capital expenditure based on the current asset lives, as per the accounting policy, income and expenditure increasing by inflation of 2.5% p.a. and a reduction in reserves. This is shown in the [chart below](#) together with the maturity profile of the Authority's existing borrowing.
- 38 The graph shows that the Authority is expecting to need to borrow in future years. The Authority will always have a borrowing requirement as it does not hold significant cash or reserves and only has limited access to capital grant funding.

- 39 The blue line represents the need to fund capital expenditure through borrowing (the Capital Financing Requirement or CFR). The red lines represent the need to fund capital expenditure through borrowing once reserves and working capital surplus' (or deficits) have been considered – this is actually the real need to borrow which CIPFA have defined as being the Liability Benchmark. The dashed red line represents the position at year end and the solid line represents the average mid-year position. The grey shaded areas show actual loans. When the grey area falls below the red lines this infers a borrowing need.



Maturity Structure of Borrowing

- 40 This indicator is set to control the Authority's exposure to refinancing risk. The upper and lower limits on the maturity structure of all borrowing were:

	30.09.25 Actual	Actual Limit	Upper Limit	Lower Limit	Complied Y/N
<12 months	4.2	27.42%	60.00%	0.00%	Y
12 months and <24 months	1.2	7.83%	45.00%	0.00%	Y
24 months and < 5 years	3.00	19.58%	45.00%	0.00%	Y
5 years and <10 years		0.00%	75.00%	0.00%	Y
>10 years	6.92	45.17%	100.00%	0.00%	Y

- 41 Time periods start on the first day of each financial year. The maturity date of borrowing is the earliest date on which the lender can demand repayment.

Long-term Treasury Management Investments

42 The Authority does not hold any long-term treasury investments.

IMPLICATIONS

Wellbeing Objectives	This report links to the Authority's long-term well-being objectives. Ensures that the purchase of assets to support front line service delivery is prudent, affordable and sustainable. Ensures there is sufficient investment in infrastructure to enable the service to provide emergency responses and prevention work well in to the future.
Budget	Budget is set annually for capital financing in line with the Treasury report.
Legal	The regulatory framework is set out in paragraph 1.
Staffing	None.
Equalities/Human Rights/Welsh Language	None.
Risks	Investment of surplus funds – there is a risk that the financial institution in which the service's funds are invested could fail with a loss of part of the principal invested. However, one of the purposes of the report is to mitigate this risk.

Report to	North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority
Date	19 January 2026
Lead Officer	Justin Evans, Assistant Chief Fire Officer
Contact Officer	Lee Bourne, Head of Training and Development
Subject	Hwb Awen Training Centre Outline Business Case



PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1 To present the Outline Business Case (OBC) for new Training Centre (Hwb Awen) at St Asaph Business Park and seek North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority (the Authority) approval to progress to the next stage of development, which will focus on securing funding and determining affordability.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 2 The Outline Business Case for Hwb Awen sets out a clear and compelling case for investment in a modern, inclusive, and sustainable training facility. Current arrangements rely on multiple ageing sites that are increasingly inefficient, costly to maintain, and unable to meet contemporary standards for safety, accessibility, and environmental performance.
- 3 The OBC identifies a purpose-built centre at St Asaph Business Park as the preferred option, offering significant operational and social benefits, including improved training realism, enhanced staff welfare, and alignment with Welsh Government priorities on decarbonisation and well-being.
- 4 Approval of the OBC is a critical milestone, enabling the project to move forward to the Full Business Case stage, where detailed design work will be undertaken, funding will be secured, and affordability will be confirmed.

RECOMMENDATION

- 5 It is recommended that Members:
 - i) **Note the content of the Outline Business Case;**
 - ii) **Approve progression to Full Business Case development; and**
 - iii) **Endorse continued engagement with Welsh Government to secure capital funding.**

BACKGROUND

- 6 The Training Centre project was initiated in 2022 following concerns about the suitability and sustainability of existing facilities. Training currently takes place across several dispersed sites, many of which are nearing the end of their operational life and do not meet modern standards for equality, safety, or environmental performance. These limitations affect the quality of training and create inefficiencies in service delivery.
- 7 In October 2024, the Authority approved the Strategic Outline Case, which confirmed the need for investment and identified St Asaph Business Park as the preferred location. Since then, significant progress has been made in refining the scope, engaging stakeholders, and developing the OBC in line with HM Treasury's Green Book guidance and Welsh Government requirements. This ensures that the project is underpinned by robust analysis and a clear governance framework.

INFORMATION

- 8 The OBC is a vital component of the project lifecycle because it provides the evidence base for decision-making and demonstrates compliance with best practice standards. It follows the five-case model recommended by HM Treasury, covering the strategic, economic, commercial, financial, and management dimensions of the proposal. This structured approach ensures that the preferred option is not only operationally necessary but also economically viable, commercially deliverable, and aligned with the Service's long-term objectives.
- 9 The OBC explains why investment is essential. Without a new facility, the Service faces escalating maintenance costs, increasing risk of non-compliance, and an inability to meet future training demands. It also sets out how the new centre will deliver significant benefits, including improved training realism, enhanced staff welfare, and reduced carbon emissions.
- 10 By approving the OBC, Members will enable the project to progress to the Full Business Case stage, where detailed design, and funding arrangements will be confirmed. This next phase is crucial for securing Welsh Government support and confirming affordability, ensuring that North Wales Fire and Rescue Service (the Service) can deliver a facility that meets operational needs and provides long-term value for money.

IMPLICATIONS

Well-being Objectives	The new facility directly contributes to workforce safety, community well-being, and organisational sustainability. Design ambitions align with the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act, focusing on resilience, inclusion, and training excellence.
Budget	No direct financial implications beyond existing Authority approved project budget commitment, as the project remains unfunded beyond the initial development phase.
Legal	Procurement processes are compliant with public sector regulations. Planning and ecological constraints (including protected species) are being managed with specialist advice. Public consultation timelines will adhere to statutory requirements.
Staffing	Staff have been actively involved through workshops and consultation sessions, shaping design principles such as realistic training environments and improved welfare spaces. This engagement ensures the facility meets operational needs and builds confidence in the project.
Equalities/Human Rights/ Welsh Language	The facility is designed to be inclusive, accessible, and bilingual. Consultation processes reflect these values.
Risks	Key risks include reliance on external funding, staff turnover, and ecological constraints. These are being mitigated through early engagement with Welsh Government, strengthened governance, and specialist environmental advice.

Report to	North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority
Date	19 January 2026
Lead Officer	ACFO Justin Evans
Contact Officer	Chris Dinwoodie, Organisational Development Manager
Subject	Gender Pay Gap Report 2024/25



PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1 To present the Gender Pay Gap Report for 2024/25 and seek approval for its publication in accordance with statutory requirements.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 2 The Gender Pay Gap Report 2024/25 provides a snapshot of pay data as at 31 March 2025, in line with the Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties and Public Authorities) Regulations 2017. The report demonstrates continued progress in reducing the gender pay gap across North Wales Fire and Rescue Service (the Service).
- 3 Mean hourly pay gap reduced from 9.30% in 2024 to 5.27% in 2025, well below the national average of 11.2%.
- 4 Median hourly pay gap reduced from 13.72% to 8.31%, slightly below the national average of 8.6%.
- 5 Female representation increased to 22% of the workforce, with positive trends in operational and corporate roles.
- 6 The report outlines ongoing commitments under the Service's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy (2024–2029) to further reduce the gap and promote gender equality.

RECOMMENDATION

- 7 It is recommended that Members:
 - i) **Approve the publication of the Gender Pay Gap Report 2024/25 on the Service's website, as required by legislation.**

BACKGROUND

- 8 Public sector organisations with 250 or more employees must publish annual gender pay gap data. The report covers six statutory measures, including mean and median pay gaps, bonus gaps, and quartile distribution. The Service employs 887 staff, with gender representation continuing to improve year-on-year.

INFORMATION

- 9 The Gender Pay Gap Report 2025 provides a comprehensive analysis of pay data across the Service as at 31 March 2025. It explains the statutory requirement for organisations with 250 or more employees to publish annual gender pay gap data and outlines the six measures used to calculate the gap, including mean and median hourly pay, bonus pay, and quartile distribution.
- 10 The report confirms that the Service continues to make progress in reducing its gender pay gap. The mean hourly pay gap has decreased significantly from 9.30% in 2024 to 5.27% in 2025, which is well below the national average of 11.2%. Similarly, the median hourly pay gap has reduced from 13.72% to 8.31%, placing the Service slightly below the national average of 8.6%. These improvements demonstrate a positive trend and reflect the impact of ongoing efforts to attract, retain and promote women within the organisation.
- 11 Bonus pay analysis shows parity, with the median bonus gap remaining at 0% for the third consecutive year. The mean bonus gap now stands at -16.48%, which is in favour of women. This outcome is largely influenced by the Continuous Professional Development (CPD) payment arrangements applicable to operational staff under Grey Book terms and conditions.
- 12 The report also provides insight into workforce composition. As of March 2025, the Service employed 887 staff, of which 22% were female. Women continue to be well represented in control and corporate roles, but men still dominate operational roles, which attract higher pay.
- 13 Female representation in operational roles has increased slightly to 13%, and there has been positive movement within the middle quartiles, indicating progression through pay scales and successful promotions. However, the upper quartile remains predominantly male, which continues to influence the overall pay gap.

14 The Service acknowledges that the gender pay gap is not related to equal pay but is driven by the distribution of roles across the organisation. To address this, the report highlights a range of actions within the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy (2024–2029), including targeted recruitment campaigns, visibility of female role models, and support for progression into supervisory and leadership positions. These measures aim to create a more balanced workforce and further reduce the gender pay gap over time.

IMPLICATIONS

Well-being Objectives	Supports a more equal, inclusive workforce aligned with the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act.
Budget	No direct financial implications beyond existing EDI commitments.
Legal	Compliance with Equality Act 2010 and associated regulations.
Staffing	Reinforces commitment to fair recruitment and progression practices.
Equalities/Human Rights/ Welsh Language	Promotes equality and inclusion; report available bilingually.
Risks	Failure to publish would result in non-compliance with statutory duties and reputational risk.



Gwasanaeth Tân ac Achub
Fire and Rescue Service

Gender Pay Gap Report 2025

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Contents

About this report	3
Our commitment to Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI)	4
Earnings	7
Quartile Pay Bands.	8
Closing the Gender Pay Gap.	9



Gwasanaeth Tân ac Achub
Fire and Rescue Service

About this report

In the UK, all public, private and voluntary sector organisations with 250 or more employees must report annually on their gender pay gap. All employers are legally obliged to give men and women equal pay for work of equal value. However, for lots of reasons, in many organisations there is a difference between the average earnings of male and female employees.

This is known as a gender pay gap (GPG) and it indicates that men might be occupying higher-paying positions in the workplace than women. It does not mean employers have breached equal pay provisions or that women are paid less than men to do the same job.

All organisations that are required to submit and publish their GPG must do so against six different measures. This information is based on a snapshot of pay data on a set date identified within Schedule 1 of the Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties and Public Authorities) Regulations 2017.

1

Mean Gender Pay Gap

The difference between the mean hourly rate of pay of male full-time relevant employees and that of female full-pay relevant employees.

2

Median Gender Pay Gap

The difference between the median hourly rate of pay of male full-pay relevant employees and that of female full-pay relevant employees.

3

Median Bonus Gap

The difference between the median bonus pay paid to eligible male employees and that paid to eligible female employees.

4

Mean Bonus Gap

The difference between the mean bonus pay paid to eligible male employees and that paid to female relevant employees.

5

Bonus Proportions

The proportion of eligible male and female employees who were paid bonus pay during the relevant period.

6

Quartile Pay Bands

The proportion of male and female full-pay employees in the lower, lower-middle, upper-middle and upper quartile pay bands.

The proportion of male and female full-pay employees in the lower, lower-middle, upper-middle and upper quartile pay bands.

In accordance with the legislation, we have produced and published this report to show North Wales Fire and Rescue Service's GPG as it stood on March 31st 2025. For comparison, we have provided data from the same date in 2024. If you have any questions or comments relating to this report and its contents, please contact us via the [North Wales Fire and Rescue Service Website](#).

Our commitment to Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI)

EDI is an important business imperative for any employer, not least a humanitarian organisation like the fire and rescue service. Our people are central to our core values “Diversity and Inclusivity”, “Striving for excellence” and “People”.

We know that developing as an organisation with diversity of thought, background and experience will make us a better employer and a better provider of public services. We work hard to create a culture where anyone, regardless of gender, age, sexual orientation, ethnicity, ability or faith, can thrive and reach their full potential. In turn, this enables us to better understand and respond to the diverse needs of the communities across North Wales and beyond.

Our Gender Pay Gap

Like other fire and rescue services with a gender-neutral approach to pay across all levels of our organisation, we still have a Gender Pay Gap. The causes are varied and complex, but they are not related to equal pay issues. For firefighter roles, terms and conditions are nationally negotiated, using role maps and nationally agreed pay scales. However, despite an increasing number of women in the workforce, men still occupy a greater number of operational workforce and management roles. Whilst women make up a larger proportion of staff in corporate service roles, there remains a lower number of women in more senior roles across the whole service, which attract higher levels of pay. Furthermore, non-operational roles are graded using an accredited job evaluation scheme and local government pay scales. These differences make it extremely difficult to make like-for-like comparisons. Our Service acknowledges the gender diversity and identity of our staff. All staff in our current workforce identify as either male or female.

As of the 31st March 2025, we employed 887 people. Below you can see a visual representation of our workforce which has been broken down into control staff, operational staff and staff in corporate service roles. In line with GPG criteria and guidance, some staff have not been included in this analysis i.e. staff on maternity, staff taking unpaid leave, secondments to name a few. This helps to ensure the figures presented in the report are a true representative and reflection of our workforce.





31/03/2025 Staff - 887	Control Staff (31)	Operational Staff (708)	FRS Staff (148)
Female – 195 (22%)	25 (81%)	89 (13%)	81 (55%)
Male – 692 (78%)	6 (19%)	619 (87%)	67 (45%)

North Wales Fire and Rescue Service (NWFRS) employ more men than women. Women are well represented within control and corporate service roles across the Service, but men still make up most of the operational team. As the operational team is by far the largest team in our service, this can go some way to explain why there is a gender pay gap currently.

Overall, the Service has increased the number of females across the workforce in the past year and there has been a positive shift in the gender balance. 195 (22%) females in 2025, compared to 192 (21.2%) females in 2024. In 2025, our Service has 89 (13%) females in **operational firefighter** roles which is one more than the '88' in 2024 and the overall percentage of females has increased by 1% when compared to 12% in 2024.

The number of employees and gender profile in the **control department** in 2025 is the same as 2024. Amongst a team of 31 employees, Control have 25 women and 6 men. Women have traditionally made up a majority of the control department and there is a track record of good retention with many long serving staff.

There has been a slight increase in the number of employees in **corporate service** roles compared to the previous year. In terms of gender profile, there are 81 (55%) females in 2025, which is a slight increase to the 79 (54.4%) females in 2024. Historically, a large majority of corporate service roles were held by females, but a shift in the past decade has seen more men apply and successfully appointed into various corporate service roles has seen a slight change in the gender profile and pay gap.

Although the number of women in Control remains the same in 2025, the number of women has increased slightly across corporate service and operational roles. Men make up the majority of people leaving the organisation in 2025 and this can have some impact on female representation. Although it should be acknowledged, the Service has continued to perform well in terms of attracting and recruiting new women into the organisation and it has also performed well to retaining talented and skilled women too.









Whilst there are several females in the Service Leadership Team (SLT), there is an acknowledgment that the Service is on a progressive journey to ensure women continue to progress through supervisory and middle management roles. The 2025 GPG report highlights some positive trends where women are progressing through some quartiles. Although there is an overall increased number of female employees in the organisation and some new females have been successfully recruited into supervisory and leadership positions, it is inevitable that the GPG will exist until there are greater numbers of women in the Service, especially in higher levels of the organisation.

We remain committed to eliminating all barriers in relation to the attraction, recruitment and retention practices to achieve an even more diverse workforce in 2025/26. Further details about our attraction, recruitment and retention strategy are provided on pages 9 and 10.



Earnings

Based on a snapshot of data available on March 31st 2025 in relation to earnings of all staff, our Service's GPG is calculated as follows.

					
	Mean Hourly Rate	2025	£18.83	£19.88	5.27%
		2024	£17.63	£19.44	9.30%
	Median Hourly Rate	2025	£18.01	£19.64	8.31%
		2024	£16.60	£19.24	13.72%
	Proportion of staff in receipt of a CPD payment (i.e. bonus)	2025	16.1%	27.7%	N/A
		2024	15%	26.3%	N/A
	CPD Payment (Mean Bonus)	2025	£0.34	£0.29	-16.48%
		2024	£0.32	£0.29	-13.16%
	CPD Payment (Median Bonus)	2025	£0.35	£0.35	0%
		2024	£0.34	£0.34	0%

Between 2024 and 2025 the **mean hourly pay** decreased from 8.29% to 5.27%. This figure considers all staff, many of which work part time (or the on-call retained duty system). Considering this, the current gap of 5.27% is well below the national average for mean hourly pay which is 11.2%.

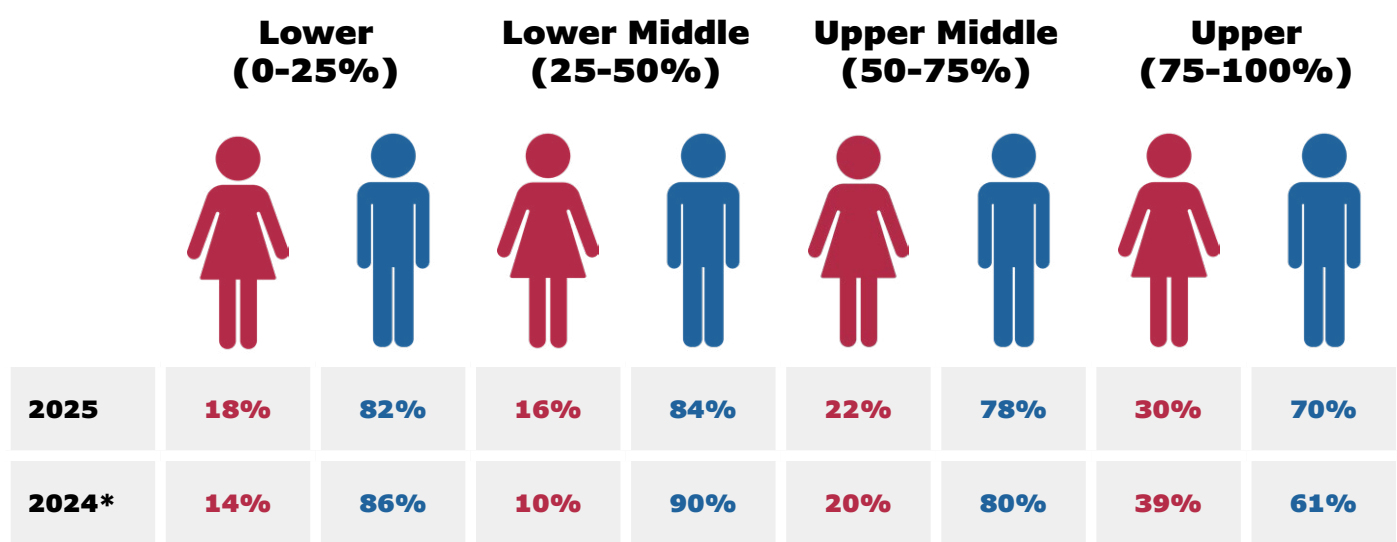
With regards to the **median hourly pay** gap, our Service has seen a reduction between 2024 and 2025 from 13.27% to 8.31%. Our Service is slightly below the national average which is 8.6%.

The Continuous Professional Development (CPD) payment, applicable only to those conditioned to the Grey Book terms and conditions, applies only to operational staff and skews the reporting of bonuses. Analysis of our Services bonus gap suggests the mean bonus is below zero which indicates there is parity between men and women. The median bonus gap figure in 2025 is -16.48%, therefore 16.48% in favour of women. This has reduced even further from -13.16% in 2024.

For the third consecutive year in a row, the median bonus is 0% which is positive trend.



Quartile Pay Bands



When you explore the four quartiles, women occupy 30% of the highest paid jobs and 18% of the lowest paid jobs. Compared to 2024, the gender profile is very similar and in terms of gender pay gap, there is no particular indication that women are progressing through the lower, lower middle, upper middle and upper quartiles.

Overall, the Service has continued to successfully recruit women into its workforce, but the pattern in the previous year has seen a female leave the organisation, to be replaced by a female on similar pay. There have been some new females enter the Service in the **lower** and **lower middle** quartiles, and it has been particularly pleasing to see further women progress through the lower middle quartiles because of increased salaries from time served and various firefighters’ transition from development to competent. Also, there has been some successful females in the promotion process and some transfers which have led to a positive impact on pay.

Female representation has continued to increase slightly in the **middle quartiles**, and this can be explained by existing female employees progressing up the pay

*The 2024 data has been restated to ensure an accurate comparison.

scales, incremental pay increases and various apprentices successfully completing their training, thus progressing on to a full firefighter salary. Employees who leave the Service also play a vital role when we explore our GPG data. The Services employment data indicates many employees who have retired or left the organisation during the 2024/25 reporting period were long serving males in operational roles, often earning top of their respective pay scales. Our Service can be proud of its ability to retain female staff and during 2024/25, there has been a slight shift in terms of the gender pay gap because some women have organically moved up into the middle quartiles when retirees (mostly males) leave the Service.

There has been a small decrease in female representation in the **upper quartile**. Although, our Service continues to benefit hugely from having several females in senior positions including the Chief Fire Officer, Assistant Chief Fire Officer, Head of Corporate Communications, Head of Control and Head of Human Resources. Many females also hold 'Deputy Head' roles across different departments and this goes some way to demonstrate how women have not only been successfully recruited and retained previously but also developed to a point that they have progressed into positions that received higher levels of pay. All females can be positive role models, but those in more senior positions are living proof for those who aspire to become leaders themselves one day. Also, females in senior positions play a vitally important role as they 'increase visibility' in the community when visiting in person and when featuring in different media channels.

Closing the Gender Pay Gap

The Service's EDI Strategy (2024-2029) includes a raft of objectives that will progress our gender equality work to ensure further women are recruited and retained into all roles across the organisation.


Specific objectives include:

- Ensure recruitment, selection and progression processes are fair and transparent and aim to reflect the diversity of the community we serve.
- Engage with women across all age groups through community groups, sports teams, schools, colleges, universities and other suitable forums to promote a wide range of career pathways and roles in the fire and rescue service and aim to breakdown negative stereotypes.
- To continue increasing visibility of female role models at taster days, fire station open days and career fairs to build on the 'see it, to be it' strapline.
- Raise further public awareness of our participation in various direct entry and national leadership programmes as a way of targeting talented and ambitious people who aspire to become future leaders.
- Implement effective redeployment arrangements to ensure any employees facing redundancy or loss of employment (other than for disciplinary reasons) are offered suitable alternative employment and re-training to help retain talented people.
- Continue to modernise our approach to working arrangements, creating a more flexible, agile and inclusive workplace which will be attractive to people with disabilities, health conditions, parental and caring responsibilities.

- To ensure Service policies and procedures promote best practice and inclusion, especially in relation to appearance, reasonable adjustments, grievance, discrimination, anti-bullying and harassment.
- Raise awareness of health and wellbeing among the workforce to reduce the risk of potential negative effects and impacts on employees and the organisation.
- Address cultural barriers to ensure the workplace environment is accessible to a diverse workforce, especially women across different all age groups and backgrounds.
- Collect and analyse personal workforce data to support effective and well-informed people management practices including recruitment priorities, positive action and barriers.
- Commit to supporting women to maintain and improve their skills within an inclusive working environment that promotes lifelong learning, development and progression.
- Ensure that learning environments are both flexible and easily accessible.
- Continue to develop our 'Women in the Fire Service' staff network, and its male allies to provide mentorship, advice and support to all female colleagues through networking, social and formal events.
- Continue to support the development of the other four staff networks which include Firepride; Neurodiversity; Religion, Ethnicity and Cultural Heritage (REACH). Collaboration amongst the staff networks will ensure an intersectional and holistic approach is adopted which will consider women with multiple identities and characteristics.



Gwasanaeth Tân ac Achub
Fire and Rescue Service

Report to	North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority	
Date	19 January 2026	
Lead Officer	ACFO Justin Evans	
Contact Officer	Chris Dinwoodie, Organisational Development Manager	
Subject	Annual Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Performance Assessment Report 2024/25	

PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1 To present the Annual Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Performance Assessment Report for 2024/25 and seek approval for its publication in line with statutory and organisational commitments.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 2 The Annual EDI Report for 2024/25 provides an overview of progress against North Wales Fire and Rescue Service's (the Service) five-year Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy. It demonstrates how the Service has continued to embed inclusivity into its organisational culture, improve workforce diversity, and deliver inclusive services to communities.
- 3 The report also highlights partnership work and actions taken in response to the Independent Culture Review, reinforcing our commitment to creating a workplace where everyone can thrive.

RECOMMENDATION

- 4 It is recommended that Members:
 - i) **Approve the publication of the Annual EDI Report 2024/25 on the Service's website.**

BACKGROUND

- 5 In 2024, the Service launched a five-year EDI Strategy to support delivery of the Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP), fulfil legal obligations, and uphold organisational values. The strategy focuses on four key aims: embedding inclusivity into organisational culture; attracting, recruiting and retaining talented people; delivering inclusive services to communities; and developing effective partnerships.

- 6 This annual report summarises progress made during 2024/25 and should be read alongside the Equality Monitoring and Gender Pay Gap reports.

INFORMATION

- 7 During 2024/25, the Service introduced new EDI training modules, including unconscious bias and autism awareness, and monitored compliance with mandatory learning. Staff networks delivered a wide range of awareness campaigns and events, and the first Service 'Ignite' EDI Conference was held to inspire and educate colleagues.
- 8 Recruitment processes were enhanced through positive action initiatives, resulting in increased female representation and ethnic diversity across the workforce. The Service also provided tailored support for neurodiverse staff and implemented reasonable adjustments to promote inclusion.
- 9 Externally, the Service delivered over 20,000 Safe and Well Checks to vulnerable community members, visited 133 schools, and engaged with diverse community groups to promote fire safety and inclusion. Partnerships were strengthened through active participation in national and regional EDI forums, and preparations began for Disability Confident Level 2 reaccreditation and Autism Accepting status.

IMPLICATIONS

Well-being Objectives	Supports a more equal, inclusive workforce aligned with the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act.
Budget	No direct financial implications beyond existing EDI commitments.
Legal	Compliance with Equality Act 2010 and associated regulations.
Staffing	Reinforces commitment to fair recruitment, progression, and retention practices.
Equalities/Human Rights/ Welsh Language	Promotes equality and inclusion; report available bilingually.
Risks	Failure to publish would result in reputational risk and non-compliance with transparency commitments.



Gwasanaeth Tân ac Achub
Fire and Rescue Service

North Wales Fire and Rescue Service

Annual Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Performance Assessment Report 2024/25



Contents

Introduction3

Theme 1 – Embedding inclusivity into our organisational culture ..4

Theme 2 - Attracting, recruiting and retaining talented people ...6

Theme 3 – Delivering inclusive services to our community9

Theme 4 – Develop effective partnerships11

Introduction

In 2024, North Wales Fire and Rescue Service (NWFRS) developed a 5-year Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Strategy (EDI Strategy) to:

- support the delivery of our Community Risk Management Plan
- ensure we fulfil our legal obligations
- uphold Our Values
- continue developing an open and inclusive culture, which reflects the diversity of North Wales

This report provides an update of the work undertaken during 2024/2025 to deliver NWFRS EDI Strategic aims of:

- embedding inclusivity into NWFRS organisational culture
- attracting, recruiting, and retaining talented people
- delivering inclusive services to our community
- developing effective partnerships

It should be read in conjunction with our Annual 2024-25 Equality Monitoring and Gender Pay Gap Reports, which provide statistical information on the impact of our EDI strategy work.

Throughout this report you will see highlights of the teamwork, collaboration, and cooperation between our staff, partner agencies, and members of the public who have all played a vital role in bringing our EDI Strategy to life, and we extend our sincere thanks to each and every one of them for their dedication and support.

We would also like to acknowledge the work started by our staff during 2025 in response to the recommendations made from our Independent Culture Review (conducted by Crest). This work will support the delivery of NWFRS EDI Strategy helping us to create an inclusive workplace culture where everyone can thrive.

Further information

To promote equality of access and inclusion, please contact us if you require this report in large print, alternative language or format:

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Theme 1 – Embedding inclusivity into our organisational culture

Key Objectives Delivered

Training and Development: Promote and monitor the uptake of EDI training and development activities, ensuring that all colleagues are aware of their professional and personal responsibilities.

Completion rates for mandatory EDI e-learning were monitored through quarterly reports reviewed by the Staff EDI Committee. By the end of March 2025, 60% of staff had successfully completed the course. We also launched new training modules covering unconscious bias, creating an inclusive workplace, and autism awareness. Mandatory training on challenging inappropriate behaviour and having difficult conversations was also introduced to help foster an inclusive culture across the service.

Raise awareness of EDI issues through internal communications, events, campaigns, and staff networks.

Progress Made – During the year, our 4 Staff EDI Network Groups met regularly to deliver a wide range of EDI awareness campaigns, events, and guidance documents. This included work to celebrate Ramadan, World Religion Day, Race Equality Week, LGBTQ month, Black History Month, International Women’s Day, and Windrush Day.

Our staff shared reflections on their own religion or faith, and how this supported them in their duties. They also attended key events (such as the Asian Fire Service Association Conference) bringing new learnings and insights back to the service to share with colleagues.

Our staff attending the Asian Fire Service Association Conference:



Our 4 EDI Network Groups and Committee organised our first EDI Staff Conference, with a great line-up of speakers who provided engaging presentations to inform, support, educate and inspire our staff.

Our Chief Fire Officer (left) with staff in our first NWFRS Ignite EDI Conference:



We introduced the Staff Cultural Engagement Forum to champion our cultural development journey. Its purpose was to identify and deliver improvement initiatives that reflected Our Values, while creating an inclusive, supportive, and collaborative environment where every individual could thrive and reach their full potential.

Our staff attending one of our Cultural Engagement Forums:

Throughout the year we took pride in promoting the use of the Welsh language within our communities and workplace, and you can read the full details of this work in our [Welsh Language Standards Annual Report 2024-2025](#)



Inclusive Workplaces and Community Facilities: Designing and adapting our buildings to create accessible and inclusive workplaces, as well as community facilities that are suitable for a modern fire and rescue service.

Progress Made – A working group was established to start developing plans for our new state of the art training centre, with consideration for accessibility and inclusion a central part of the initial discussions.

Our EDI Officer also attended the Service's Land and Property Committee meetings to embed inclusion and accessibility into all estate building and modernisation projects and activities.

Conducting robust equality analysis: Ensuring that the Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) process is embedded across the organisation to consider the needs of all those impacted by strategic decision making, planning, policy design, training and service delivery.

Progress Made – During the last year 39 members of staff completed EqIA training, gaining practical skills and knowledge to critically analyse the impact of their work on our people with protected characteristics. This training supported our work to develop a culture of EDI review, reflection and integration throughout our change management, planning, policy design, training, and service delivery activities.



Theme 2 - Attracting, recruiting and retaining talented people

Key Objectives Delivered

Adopt a creative and innovative approach to positive action, removing any barriers in our recruitment processes and maximising opportunities to reach underrepresented groups.

Progress Made – During the year we analysed workforce data to identify underrepresented groups. This prompted us to introduce a new inclusive approach to interviews, with relevant reading materials and pre-interview preparation time now supplied to all candidates with the aim of creating a supportive and equitable recruitment process.

We also took part in a number of events across North Wales, including Disability Confident, What's Next, and Pride to widen access and visibility, promote career opportunities, and share our fire safety messages to people from underrepresented communities.

Our staff promoting fire safety and careers messages during Colwyn Bay, Llangefni, and Wrexham Pride events:



During our Wholetime Firefighter recruitment campaign, we arranged a number of positive action Fire Fit and Experience Days (pictured below), Facebook films, and Social Media Q&A events to promote Fire Fighting career opportunities to people from underrepresented backgrounds.

Prospective candidates attending one of our Community Experience Days - as part of our wholetime Firefighter recruitment campaign:



Our ongoing commitment to fostering an inclusive culture is reflected in the recruitment and progression of our workforce. Over the past year, 10 additional female employees joined the service, and we saw six female colleagues successfully pass our promotion process to move into manager roles.

This progress was further supported by our positive 2024/25 Gender Pay Gap results where the gap in mean hourly pay had narrowed significantly from 9.30% in 2024 to 5.27%.

Continuously monitor workforce demographic data to identify trends that help us target underrepresented groups in our recruitment efforts and retention of existing staff in our workforce.

Progress Made – During the year, our 4 Staff EDI Network Groups met regularly to deliver a wide range of EDI awareness campaigns, events, and guidance documents. This included work to celebrate Ramadan, World Religion Day, Race Equality Week, LGBTQ month, Black History Month, International Women's Day, and Windrush Day.

Provide cognitive screening, targeted support and adjustments to individual employees at every stage of the employee lifecycle, including physical adaptations and flexible working arrangements.

Progress Made – We have now provided personalised support to 76 members of staff using evidence-based neurodiversity checklists and cognitive screening tools. This work has helped us to implement reasonable adjustments, or workplace needs assessments to help staff flourish in their work and widen access to career progression.

What progress have we made this year?

During 2024/25 the service maintained steady levels of diversity amongst our workforce, with some noticeable increases in the levels of female staff, and staff from ethnic minority backgrounds. This was reflected in the:

- service increasing the ethnic diversity of the workforce from 29 in 2023/24 to 39 in 2024/25
- service observing an increase in the overall number of female employees from 192 in 2023/24 to 202 in 2024/25 across all roles
- service increasing the number of females in Corporate Services roles from 79 in 2023/24 to 81 2024/25 respectively
- number of females in Operational roles continuing to increase from 113 in 2023/24 to 121 in 2024/25
- service maintaining an equal split of female and male Principal Officers
- Service observing a slight increase in the number of employees with a disability from 101 in 2023 to 102 in 2024/25

The breakdown overleaf shows how many staff have decided to disclose personal information in 2024/25 based on some key protected characteristics and those who decline to provide an answer. These percentages are based on individual posts which total 949 and reflect strong response rates in these areas.

Protected Characteristic	Answer Provided	Not Known / Not Stated
Disability	96.0%	4.0%
Relationship status	97.8%	2.2%
Race (including ethnicity)	98.8%	1.2%
Religion or belief	91.4%	8.6%
Sexual Orientation	93.7%	6.3%

Theme 3 – Delivering inclusive services to our community

Key Objectives Delivered

Act as visible EDI champions and role models by participating in community events and festivals, supporting awareness campaigns, and contribute to the shaping of the national EDI agenda.

Progress Made – In 2024/25, 133 schools were visited, with 11,563 fire safety interactions delivered.

A key area of focus was our work to deliver over 20,000 Safe and Well Checks, which uses a risk-based approach to reaching the most vulnerable members of our community (due to age, disability, health, or social isolation) to provide fire safety advice and support.

Staff from our Prevention and Station teams also worked in partnership with a number of local schools (including Ysgol Morgan Llwyd, Ysgol Treffynnon and Ysgol Friars) to deliver our Phoenix Programme – engaging 203 young people who may be struggling behaviourally, socially, or educationally in teamwork, skill-building and fire safety.

Pupils learning new skills on the Phoenix Project:

Our Education staff also worked in collaboration with North Wales Police to deliver the “Olivia’s Story” a powerful road safety campaign to 800 young people.

In addition, they also delivered bespoke education programmes to Occupational Therapists, carers outreach groups, homeless support groups and university students.

Our Prevention and Station teams also attended various events and visited local communities across North Wales (including the STAND North Wales Disability Roadshow; Bangor University Freshers Fair; and The Royal Welsh Show) not only helping to build visibility and connections, but also to promote our fire safety and recruitment messages with harder to reach members of our communities.

As part of our Gypsy, Roma and Traveller (GRT) History Month and Christmas Fire Safety campaigns, our Prevention Team engaged with 42 Travellers, boaters, and boat dwellers along the Llangollen Canal to deliver Safe and Well checks.

Our staff in Bangor University Freshers Fair, the Royal Welsh Show and at Llangollen Canal:



Engage and consult with our communities in an inclusive manner, seeking diverse perspectives and feedback on our strategic objectives, proposals and plans.

Progress Made – In 2024, we actively engaged and consulted with community groups, college students, and charities from across North Wales to gather feedback from underrepresented communities on our new Community Risk Management Implementation Plan.

Provide department-specific training and guidance to ensure that colleagues understand the importance of EDI in their day-to-day roles.

Progress Made – During the last financial year our frontline staff began accredited autism and ADHD awareness training through Neurodiversity Wales, giving insight into barriers, communication preferences, and inclusion strategies to support members of the public and their colleagues.

A number of staff from across the service also completed training to improve their understanding and confidence in communicating with members of the public or colleagues who have a hearing impairment.

Our Rhyl Station hosted Women in the Fire Service's 'Walk and Talk' events; we promoted Diwali safety advice on our website and through local community groups and multi-cultural hubs; we promoted Lunar New Year fire safety messages with the Chinese and other Asian communities; and arranged for staff to represent the service in the annual Holocaust Memorial Service organised by Bangor University. All these activities help to build visibility and connections within our diverse communities.



Theme 4 – Develop effective partnerships

Key Objectives Delivered

Stay engaged with external benchmarking and relevant organisations to maintain our leadership and best practice standards in EDI.

Progress Achieved – In March 2025, we enrolled in the accredited Autism Awareness training programme for frontline teams. Over the next financial year, we will ensure staff complete this training, positioning our service to achieve ‘Autism Accepting’ status from Neurodiverse Wales.

We also formed a Disability Confident Task and Finish Group to prepare for reaccreditation from Level 1 to Level 2 during 2025/26. This work will connect us with other public services and employers and enabled us to join the North Wales Disability Confident Network to share best practice and organise joint recruitment events.

Play an active role in the All-Wales Fire and Rescue EDI group and working in collaboration with the other Fire & Rescue Services across the UK to promote efficiencies and share best practice.

Progress Made – We have actively attended quarterly All-Wales EDI meetings with other Welsh Fire and Rescue Services, where we shared training content and approaches to Equality Impact Assessments. We also exchanged policies and practices to strengthen collaboration.

Our EDI Officer and colleagues engaged with national forums, including The National Fire Chiefs Council working groups, The Asian Fire Service Association, The North Wales Interfaith Forum, and The Welsh Local Government Association Equality Officers Network. This work not only helped to share information and best practice but also promoted inclusion across the wider sector.



Report to	North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority
Date	19 January 2026
Lead Officer	Helen MacArthur Assistant Chief Fire Officer
Contact Officer	Elgan Roberts, Head of Finance and Procurement
Subject	Provisional Outturn 2025-26



PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1 To provide Members with an update on the revenue and capital expenditure forecast for 2025/26, as at 30 November 2025.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 2 North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority (the Authority) approved a net revenue budget of £51.788m for 2025/26, funded by the constituent local authorities. To maintain this budget cap, a number of non-recurring measures were agreed, including the use of £0.601m from reserves.
- 3 Based on expenditure to 30 November, the revenue expenditure is now forecast to be £51.727m, which is an underspend of £0.061m, which includes costs relating to various projects, national pay settlements and movement to reserves.
- 4 The Authority approved a capital budget of £6.100m for 2025/26 supplemented by £2.589m in rollover funding from prior years. The capital programme is experiencing slippage on schemes and it is anticipated that expenditure will be £6.295m and a requirement to rollover funding of £2.800m.
- 5 Key financial risks continue to be workforce availability, notably overtime, temporary promotions, and sickness-related cost which are driven by operational demand and establishment changes. Inflation and supply-chain pressures affecting both non-pay (utilities, third-party services) and the capital programme and finally interest-rate volatility and refinancing risk on our borrowing. These risks are actively monitored through the Service Finance and Procurement Committee and recorded on the Authority's risk register.

RECOMMENDATIONS

6 Members are asked to:

- i) **note the projected revenue outturn position and the projected capital slippage for the 2025/26 financial year, as detailed within the report;**
- ii) **note the risks associated with the provisional outturn and recognise that the figures forecasted in this report are prudent; and**
- iii) **note the proposed movement to reserves of £0.548m for LGPS pension rebate.**

OBSERVATIONS FROM EXECUTIVE PANEL/AUDIT COMMITTEE

7 This report has not previously been considered by members.

BACKGROUND

- 8 Each year the Authority is required to set a balanced revenue budget which must be approved by the full Authority. The final budget for 2025/26 was approved by the Authority at its meeting of the 20 January 2025. This confirmed a net revenue budget requirement of £51.788m to be funded by the constituent local authorities.
- 9 When setting the budget, Members also approved a range of non-recurring measures necessary to achieve financial balance within 2025/26 which included utilising reserves.
- 10 The capital plan of £6.100m was presented to the Members Budget Scrutiny working group and also approved by the Authority.
- 11 This budget monitoring report provides information on the draft revenue and capital expenditure outturn position for the 2025/26 financial year.

INFORMATION

REVENUE BUDGET

- 12 **Pay:** Employee costs represent over 70% of gross expenditure and the 2025/26 staffing budget is £38.233m, including measures taken when setting the budget to contain expenditure within the figure approved. However, it was also noted at that time that the national pay negotiations were ongoing.
- 13 The budget setting process included an assumption that pay awards for 2025/26 would be 3% for all staff. The outcome of the April 2025 pay award for local government staff was an increase 3.2% with firefighters' pay award also settled at 3.2% from 1 July 2025 onwards.

- 14 **Non-pay:** The non-pay forecasts account for known costs and any reductions in expenditure. However, uncertainty persists due to the general economic outlook and supply chain challenges.
- 15 **Income:** Whilst the majority of expenditure is funded from the constituent authority levy, income is received from the Welsh Government for grant funded activities, as well as recharges from other bodies in relation to the use of our premises. In addition, the Authority has benefitted from additional income from secondments and a one-off grant from the Welsh Government to support pay inflation for 2025/26.
- 16 **Revenue cost of capital:** Capital financing costs include the costs of borrowing and revenue charges for using capital assets. It is anticipated that this budget will be underspent due to the delays in completing capital projects and reduction in MRP following utilisation of CERA (Capital Expenditure charged to Revenue Account).

REVENUE OUTTURN FORECAST FOR 2025/26

- 17 At this stage within the financial year there remains a number of uncertainties and risks that may impact on the financial performance of the Authority. It is anticipated that the outturn may range from break-even through to an underspend of £0.7m before transfers to earmarked reserves. However, based on year-to-date expenditure, the most likely full year revenue forecast as at 30 November 2025 is set out below and indicates an underspend of £0.061m.

	Budget (£m)	Forecast (£m)	Variance (£m)	Variance (%)
Employees	38.233	37.615	0.618	1.6%
Premises	2.818	3.093	(0.275)	-9.8%
Transport	1.327	1.489	(0.162)	-12.2%
Supplies	6.182	5.843	0.338	5.5%
Third Party Payments	0.367	0.427	(0.060)	-16.5%
Capital Finance & Charges	4.501	3.853	0.648	14.4%
Income	(1.039)	(1.141)	0.102	-9.8%
Use of Reserves	(0.601)	0.548	(1.149)	191%
Forecast Outturn	51.788	51.727	0.061	0.12%

EMPLOYEE COSTS

- 18 Employee costs form a significant element of the budget (over 70% of gross costs) and include pay, pension costs, cost of recruitment and training, and employee services, such as occupational health services.
- 19 The forecasted underspend of £0.618m on employee costs is primarily due to a pension rebate received from the LGPS, following a surplus in the pension fund. It is proposed that this underspend be transferred to reserves to support future pension-related costs.
- 20 Action continues to focus on increasing the number of Retained Duty System (RDS) firefighters to address and maintain appliance availability. At the time of setting the 2025/26 budget, there were 474 RDS personnel, and provision was made to increase capacity by a further 15 posts. This reflected the improvements achieved in recent years to strengthen retained capacity and provide essential cover.
- 21 However, as shown in the table below, this remains a significant challenge, with actual numbers falling below the original budgeted level during the early part of the financial year. Encouragingly, following successful recruitment during November 2025, headcount has increased, alongside a modest improvement in the 100% equivalent measure.

RDS Analysis	Budget 2025/26	Mar-25	Jun-25	Sep-25	Nov-25
Headcount	489	490	487	484	503
100% equivalent	390	367	364	357	366

- 22 The underspend in the RDS staff budget reflects ongoing recruitment and retention challenges, as well as variances in variable pay elements such as drill fees, training allowances, and activity payments.
- 23 Recruitment to specialised posts within corporate departments has continued to prove difficult during 2025/26, and a full-year underspend is anticipated.
- 24 A review of the Fire Safety Department, deferred from 2024/25, resulted in underspends earlier in the year. To meet demand, temporary costs are expected in Quarter 4 to increase team capacity while permanent recruitment progresses.

NON-PAY COSTS

- 25 The non-pay budget which covers Premises, Transport Supplies, Third Party Payments, and Capital Finance & Charges, is forecast to be underspent by £0.489m.
- 26 Non-pay expenditure is subject to ongoing review by budget holders to ensure that the projections continue to be reasonable and to manage unavoidable costs.
- 27 The premises forecast indicates an overspend driven by several factors. These include the procurement of a new cleaning contract, which incorporates additional cleaning requirements for the nucleus station. Efficiencies will need to be identified to offset these costs in 2026/27, estimated at £0.055m. In addition, £0.047m has been allocated for estate strategy work, which will be funded from reserves if required, and £0.028m for a condition report on mechanical and electrical systems. Further cost pressures have arisen from reactive works exceeding budget, although these have been partially mitigated by reductions in utility costs.
- 28 Following the adoption of IFRS 16, lease costs are now recorded within departmental budgets such as premises or transport to improve visibility of expenditure. For 2025/26, the overall budget for these leases sits under capital financing; therefore, any local overspend within departments is offset against the capital financing budget.
- 29 Third-party payments are exceeding the allocated budget by £60k, primarily due to a higher-than-inflation increase in the Service Level Agreement (SLA) with North Wales Police for the 2025/26 financial year.
- 30 The cost pressures detailed above are being mitigated by underspends in other areas. Planned consultancy projects have either been postponed or delivered at a lower cost following procurement, and ICT and hardware procurement are underspent by £0.053m and £0.039m respectively.
- 31 The forecast for capital finance is currently under budget. This is due to lease costs offsetting departmental overspends and the funding of capital schemes from revenue during 2024/25, which has reduced the minimum revenue provision payable in 2025/26 by £0.276m.

INCOME

- 32 In addition to the constituent authority levy, the budget includes anticipated income from fees, charges, and grants. This primarily relates to recharges for shared buildings with other entities and service level agreements with various organisations.
- 33 Income is forecast to exceed the budget by £0.102m. This overachievement is due to the Authority receiving £0.039m from the sale of vehicles and an additional £0.051m from Welsh Government to help meet the cost of pay awards above the standard 3% assumption. This supplementary funding reflects the 3.2% settlements for both grey and green book staff and provides targeted support for this year's cost pressures.

CAPITAL PROGRAMME

- 34 The Authority approved a capital programme totalling £6.100m in January 2025, with an additional £2.589m carried forward from 2024/25 due to delays in delivery.
- 35 Since the budget was set, Welsh Government grant funding of £0.570m was secured during Quarter 4 of 2024/25. Selected items from the 2025/26 capital plan will be deferred to 2026/27 to allow time for the completion of business cases and to align with anticipated expenditure timelines, given the extended procurement process.
- 36 As at the end of November, capital expenditure stands at £3.797m. Most schemes are expected to be delivered within the current financial year, with a year-end projection of £6.295m.
- 37 Due to slippage in the capital programme, a rollover funding request of £2.800m is forecast. Further detail is provided in the accompanying table.

Project Name/Description	Budget £m	Actual £m	Forecast £m	Rollover £m
Fleet	2.392	1.712	1.712	750
Facilities	1.513	427	1.288	614
ICT	232	191	216	0
Tech Ops	469	257	387	0
Reactive works	1.494	731	1.539	0
2025/26 Sub Total	6.100	3.318	5.142	1.364
Rollover Budget	2.589	479	1.153	1.436
Unfinanced Capital Plan 2025/26	8.689	3.797	6.295	2.800
In year Grants				
Facilities - Rhyl	0.648	0.000	0.648	0.000
Financed Capital Plan 2025/26	0.648	0.000	0.648	0.000

38 The anticipated financing of the capital expenditure is set out below:

Funding	Amount £m
Borrowing	5.859
Earmarked Reserves	1.379
Capital expenditure charged to the GF (CERA)	1.451
Grant Funding	0.648
Total	9.337

IMPLICATIONS

Well-being Objectives	This report links to NWFRA's long-term well-being objectives. Funding for the Service benefits the communities of North Wales and ensures there is sufficient investment in infrastructure to enable the service to provide emergency responses and prevention work well into the future.
Budget	Budget is set annually in accordance with the proposed service delivery which includes emergency response and prevention work.
Legal	The Authority remains compliant with its statutory duty to produce financial reports and maintain a balanced budget.
Staffing	Effective financial management supports the long-term workforce strategy to ensure that the Authority is able to discharge its responsibilities
Equalities/Human Rights/Welsh Language	None
Risks	Income and expenditure is closely monitored to ensure that deviations from the approved budget are properly identified and reported to Members.