

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 **MONDAY 17 JULY 2023** virtually via Zoom.

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 meeting held on 17 April 2023**
- 5. Matters Arising**
- 6. Emergency Cover Review**
- 7. Chair's Report**
- 8. Appointment of New Internal Auditor – for information**
- 9. Treasury Management Activity 2022/23**
- 10. Internal Audit Annual Report 2022/23**
- 11. Annual Governance Statement 2022/23**
- 12. Financial Outturn 2022/23**
- 13. Local Pension Board Annual Report 2022/23**
- 14. Environmental Strategy 2023/30**
- 15. Performance Monitoring Report April 2022-March 2023**

16. 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.

17. None

NORTH WALES FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY

Minutes of the meeting of **North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority** held on **Monday 17 April 2023** virtually via **Zoom**. Meeting commenced at **09.30hrs**.

Councillor

Dylan Rees (Chair)
Paul Cunningham (Deputy Chair)
Bryan Apsley
Marion Bateman
Carol Beard
Michelle Walker
Tina Claydon
Jeff Evans
Chrissy Gee
Chris Hughes
John Brynmor Hughes
Dyfed Jones
Marc Jones
Gwynfor Owen
Beverley Parry-Jones
Arwyn Herald Roberts
Austin Roberts
Gareth A Roberts
Rondo Roberts
Gareth Sandilands
Dale Selvester
Nigel Smith
Rob Triggs
Mark Young

Representing

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

Also present:

Dawn Docx
Stewart Forshaw
Helen MacArthur
Stuart Millington
Dafydd Edwards
Gareth Owens
Lisa Allington
Helen Howard
Tracey Williams

Chief Fire Officer
Deputy Chief Fire Officer
Assistant Chief Fire Officer
Assistant Chief Fire Officer
Treasurer
Clerk and Monitoring Officer
Executive Assistant
Head of Finance and Procurement
Head of Corporate Communications

1 APOLOGIES

Councillor

Adele Davies-Cooke

Representing

Flintshire County Council

ABSENT

Councillor

Neil Coverley

Alan Hughes

Paul Rogers

Representing

Conwy County Borough Council

Denbighshire County Council

Wrexham County Borough Council

It was noted that Cllr Carol Beard and Cllr John Brynmor Hughes may have to leave the meeting early.

2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

2.1 There were no declarations of interest to record.

3 NOTICE OF URGENT MATTERS

3.1 There was no notice of urgent matters.

4 MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 16 JANUARY 2023

4.1 The minutes of the meeting held on 16 January 2023 were submitted for approval.

4.2 **RESOLVED to:**

(i) approve the minutes as a true and correct record of the meetings held.

5 MATTERS ARISING

5.1 There were no matters arising to record.

6 CHAIR'S REPORT

6.1 It was noted that a written paper had been supplied for this meeting to provide Members with information on the meetings and events attended by the Chair and Deputy Chair of the North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority (the Authority) in their official capacities between January 2023 and March 2023.

6.2 The Chair encouraged Members to attend the Phoenix Celebration of Achievement ceremonies if at all possible, as they were both heart-warming and inspiring events.

- 6.3 It was asked whether the Chair felt the Social Partnership Forum to be of benefit to the Authority. The Chair responded that this related to new legislation and felt that they would become very productive as they progressed. The Chair also felt that having a regular audience with the Deputy Minister could only be of benefit to the Authority.
- 6.4 Chief Docx also commented that this was a good opportunity to be able to discuss issues of commonality across the three fire services in Wales, and that the benefits of this would be seen in the future.

- 6.4 **RESOLVED to:**
(i) note the information provided.

7 FIREFIGHTER PAY AWARDS AND POTENTIAL INDUSTRIAL ACTION

- 7.1 CFO Docx presented the Firefighter Pay Awards and Potential Industrial Action paper, which aimed to update Members as to the progress of the firefighter pay dispute and the prospect of industrial action, a subject which Members had been regularly briefed upon over the last six months.
- 7.2 Chief Docx took this opportunity to express how proud she was of the professional manner in which so many Service staff had prepared for the potential of industrial action.
- 7.3 It was noted that there had been no additional funding within Wales to meet the Pay Award, which meant a difference for the Service of around £1m between that which had been projected in the budget and the actual award. This additional sum would therefore need to be provided by the Authority. However, the fact that a settlement had been reached was positive news for all concerned.
- 7.4 One Member felt it amazing that a pay offer agreement could be reached without the offer of financial help from the Welsh Government, and suggested that this should be discussed further at the next Audit Committee meeting.
- 7.5 The Chair confirmed that the matter would also be raised in the next Social Partnership Forum with the Deputy Minister.
- 7.6 It was further noted that, whilst this matter had previously been raised in the Audit Committee and observations had been made, there was no reference to those comments within that meeting in the paper. Chief Docx agreed that the report should better reflect the minutes from the Audit Committee and Executive Panel and future papers would be amended accordingly.

- 7.7 **RESOLVED to:**
- (i) note the acceptance of the NJC pay offer to employees on grey book terms and conditions;**
 - (ii) note the cessation of preparations for industrial action;**
 - (iii) note the financial implications;**
 - (iv) raise the issue of additional funding for the pay award at the Social Partnership Forum; and**
 - (iv) ensure that future papers better reflect the minutes of the Audit Committee and Executive Panel.**

8 PROVISIONAL OUTTURN 2022/23

8.1 ACFO MacArthur presented the Provisional Outturn 2022/23 paper, which provided Members with an update on the revenue and capital expenditure position for 2022/23, as at 28 February 2023. A number of important aspects were highlighted.

8.2 It was noted that Audit Wales had advised the Service that they did not have the capacity to meet the usual timescales for audit of the annual accounts, and a revised deadline of the end of November 2023 for all Local and Fire Authorities had been put in place. The final draft of the accounts would therefore be provided to Members at the meeting of 17 July 2023.

8.3 Members were informed that, in order to monitor such expenditure, data on sickness absence would be provided as part of performance monitoring from now on.

- 8.4 **RESOLVED to:**
- (i) note the draft revenue and capital outturn projections for the 2022/23 financial year as detailed within the report;**
 - (ii) note the risks associated with inflation and supply chain issues;**
 - (iii) note the risks associated with the ongoing pay negotiations; and**
 - (iv) approve the use of earmarked and general fund reserves.**

9 ANNUAL REVIEW OF THE AUTHORITY'S CORPORATE PLAN 2021-24

9.1 DCFO Forshaw presented the Annual Review of the Authority's Corporate Plan 2021-24 paper, which presented Members with the updated Corporate Plan 2021-24 for approval following its annual review.

- 9.2 One Member noted that the report included a significant amount of data, and wondered how this data was communicated to the community and how well it was felt that was done.
- 9.3 DCFO Forshaw confirmed that the report was published on the Service website and that consultation meetings with various stakeholders were being planned with regards to the Emergency Cover review, which would also provide an opportunity for data and information to be given.
- 9.4 It was asked how the data compared to that of other Fire Services within Wales, especially with regards to False Alarms where the data seemed concerning. DCFO Forshaw responded that the Authority received information around all areas of reporting within the quarterly Performance Monitoring Report. An increase in false alarms had been noted in both domestic and non-domestic properties and Audit Wales would be producing a report on attendance at Automatic Fire Alarms across all services within Wales which would be provided to Members at the Authority meeting of 17 July 2023.
- 9.5 One Member noted that one fifth of all calls were false alarms, and that a report to the Audit Committee would be welcomed in order to look into this further.
- 9.6 A question was raised around the statutory indicators and how the figures currently compared to the pre-pandemic period, as they appeared to have risen significantly. DCFO Forshaw confirmed that these figures would be included in the quarterly Performance Monitoring Report.
- 9.7 It was noted that this year, for the first year in North Wales, there had been no accidental dwelling fire deaths and this was due to the efforts of all employees providing prevention advice over the last decade. Members felt that this was something to be celebrated.
- 9.8 Members congratulated the Service both on the above, and for the work that they carry out on prevention within the Community which they felt was both effective and valued.
- 9.9 Deputy Forshaw was thanked for his report, and the data contained within it.
- 9.10 **RESOLVED to:**
- (i) note the refreshed appearance of the 2023-24 Corporate Plan annual review in comparison to previous years;**
 - (ii) note that data contained within it is subject to final audit; and**
 - (iii) approve the 2023/24 Corporate Plan for publication on the Service website.**

10 PUBLIC SERVICE BOARDS WELLBEING PLANS - FOR APPROVAL

- 10.1 ACFO MacArthur presented the Public Service Boards Wellbeing Plans which presented to Members the draft Wellbeing Plans of the three Public Service Boards (PSB) in North Wales for approval.
- 10.2 It was noted that the reports provided covered the period 2023 to 2028 and had been revised and refreshed.
- 10.3 **RESOLVED to:**
- (i) note the requirements of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015; and**
 - (ii) approve the three well-being plans in their capacity as the Fire and Rescue Authority.**

11. PAY POLICY STATEMENT 2023-24

- 11.1 ACFO MacArthur presented the Pay Policy Statement 2023-24, which informed Members of the Fire and Rescue Authority's responsibilities arising from the Localism Act 2011 (the Act). A number of important aspects were highlighted.
- 11.2 It was noted that this Policy had previously been supplied to the Executive Panel, who had subsequently approved it.
- 11.3 One Member asked whether it would be possible to look at the financial feasibility of the provision of a car to chief officers within the next Audit Committee meeting, and it was responded that this was in line with National Terms and Conditions and formed part of the remuneration package.
- 11.4 **RESOLVED to:**
- (i) note the requirements of the Localism Act 2011; and**
 - (ii) approve the Pay Policy Statement for the 2023/24 financial year.**

12. STANDARDS COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT

- 12.1 Gareth Owens, Clerk to the Authority, presented to Members the Standards Committee Annual Report. This report presented the Standards Committee's Annual Report to the North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority (the Authority) as required by legislation.
- 12.2 It was noted that, whilst this was the Standards Committee's 18th Annual Report, this was the first year that it had become a statutory duty to provide it.

- 12.3 **RESOLVED to:**
(i) **note the Standards Committee's annual report for 2022/23.**

13 RE-APPOINTMENT OF INDEPENDENT MEMBERS

- 13.1 Gareth Owens, Clerk to the Authority, presented the Re-Appointment of Independent Members paper, which proposed re-appointing two Independent Members to the North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority's (the Authority) Standards Committee.
- 13.2 One Member noted that there were issues with declaring an interest on this item due to the fact that little information had been provided on the Independent Members concerned, meaning it was difficult to establish whether they were known.
- 13.3 The Clerk confirmed that the paper would be amended in the future in order to provide further information in this area. It was noted that an interest only need be declared if the Members concerned were known on a personal level.
- 13.4 Declarations of interest were received by Cllr Dylan Rees and Cllr Gwynfor Owen, as they both knew Gareth Pritchard on a personal level.
- 13.5 It was noted that this decision could only be taken by the Full Fire Authority and could not be delegated.
- 13.6 **RESOLVED to:**
(i) **re-appoint Gill Murgatroyd and Gareth Pritchard for a period of four years, from 1 September 2023.**

14 PROGRESS REPORT ON EMERGENCY COVER REVIEW

- 14.1 ACFO Millington presented the Progress Report on Emergency Cover Review paper, which provided members with an overview of the purpose of undertaking the Emergency Cover Review and the methodology which would be used. This report outlined the information presented to the Authority Members' working group which had so far met on 14 March 2023 and 04 April 2023.
- 14.2 It was noted that a number of options had been considered, and a blend of three of those options had been requested. The final draft of this option would be scrutinised by the working group on 02 May and the Executive Panel on 19 June, prior to it being brought to the Full Authority meeting on 17 July.
- 14.3 It was noted that this paper was for information purposes and no decisions were required at this stage.

- 14.4 **RESOLVED to:**
i) **note the contents of this report.**

15 ENVIRONMENTAL STRATEGY 2023-2030

- 15.1 ACFO Millington presented the Environmental Strategy 2023-2030 which provided Members with an update in relation to the progress made in the Environment and Sustainability working group towards the completion of an overarching Environmental Strategy. Upon completion, the draft strategy would be brought to North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority (the Authority) for approval.
- 15.2 Members of the working group had received the first draft of the Environmental Strategy on Friday 14 April 2023.
- 15.3 It was noted that the times of the future workshops referred to in the paper had been changed, and all workshops would now commence at 09:00hrs.
- 15.4 Members from Wrexham County Council were encouraged to put their names forward to sit on the working groups for both the Sustainability and New Training Centre working groups.
- 15.5 ACFO Millington and Environment and Climate Change Manager, Tim Christensen, were thanked for their thought provoking and engaging presentations at the working group meeting of 04 April.
- 15.6 **RESOLVED to:**
(i) note the progress made towards the completion of a draft environmental Strategy for the period 2023-2030.

16 NEW TRAINING CENTRE UPDATE

- 16.1 DCFO Forshaw presented the New Training Centre Update paper which presented an update on the work undertaken on the production of a detailed business case for a new fire and rescue training and development centre in North Wales.
- 16.2 It was noted that a representative from Wrexham was still required for the New Training Centre working group.
- 16.3 It was asked whether enquiries had been made with North Wales Police and the Welsh Ambulance Service with regards to sharing these facilities, and responded that initial discussions had taken place.

16.4 RESOLVED to:

- (i) note the background to reviewing fire and rescue training facilities in North Wales;**
- (ii) note that the current training provision is reaching its end of life;**
- (iii) note the next stage of the project has commenced to confirm the suitability of the identified land; and**
- (iv) note the timescales set out in this report for the provision of a detailed business case for Members' consideration.**

17 URGENT MATTERS

17.1 There were no urgent matters.

It was noted that the next meeting would take place on 17 July 2023.

Meeting closed: 11:00hrs

Report to	North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority
Date	17 July 2023
Lead Officer	Stewart Forshaw, Deputy Chief Fire Officer
Contact Officer	Anthony Jones – Head of Planning, Performance and Transformation
Subject	Emergency Cover Review



PURPOSE OF REPORT

1. To provide Members with an update on the progress of the Emergency Cover Review since the last progress report which was presented to the North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority (the Authority) on 17 April 2023.
2. To confirm with Members the process and timescales for the Authority's public consultation on the future of emergency cover for the communities of North Wales.
3. To seek confirmation from the Authority of the options to be included within the public consultation.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

4. Following the commissioning of an Emergency Cover Review by the Authority in September 2021, extensive work has been undertaken and the findings presented to the Member led Emergency Cover Working Group. This has met on five occasions between March 2023 and June 2023. The focus of the group has been to consider options around a future service delivery model to address existing availability challenges and to be able to respond to future operational risks.
5. This report confirms the action taken to ensure compliance with the principles of public sector consultation and provides an overview of the pre-consultation already undertaken.
6. This report seeks a decision on the options to take to full public consultation.

RECOMMENDATION

7. It is requested that Members either:
 - i) Endorse the recommendation to commence a public consultation around options 1 and 2; or
 - ii) Alternatively, agree to commence a public consultation around options of 1, 2 and 3

INFORMATION

8. The Audit Wales review of Corporate Resilience in North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority was published in April 2021. It recommended that the Authority should review station locations to identify opportunities to optimise emergency response arrangements.
9. In addition, the Chief Fire Officer's (CFO) situational assessment presented to Authority Members on 20 September 2021 highlighted a number of key risks facing the Authority. These included the challenges of maintaining sufficient day time availability of on call firefighters working on the 36 retained duty system (RDS) stations in North Wales
10. In response, the Authority agreed to initiate a programme of reviews including an Emergency Cover Review (ECR). The key objective of the ECR was to consider the current arrangements and to recommend options to provide a fair, sustainable and equitable emergency response across the whole of North Wales, balancing demand and current and future community risks.
11. This work has been overseen by a Member led Emergency Cover Review Working Group. Membership comprised of six Members, one from each constituent local authority.
12. An independent company, ORH, was commissioned to work with the Emergency Cover Review team. ORH are industry experts and provide data analytics to a range of organisations working in the emergency sector. They have provided technical support in relation to data analysis and modelling to critique current emergency cover arrangements and to identify the optimum locations of any additional day staffed stations.
13. There have been five meetings of the working group to review potential options for improvements; 14 March, 4 April, 2 May, 5 June and 22 June 2023. All the Members of the Authority were invited to the first and last meeting.

14. Through their deliberations Members have discounted two options:
15. To continue with existing emergency cover arrangements, accept the daytime availability risk and to no longer put in place the daily relocation of firefighters to mitigate those risks.
16. To continue with the existing emergency cover arrangements and introduce three additional day staffed stations at an extra additional cost of £2.25 million
17. In summary, the status quo was rejected because of the inequality of response service across North Wales, the risks involved to firefighters and to the public and the costs involved.
18. Members indicated that they wished to consult on those options which seek to meet the aims of the ECR by reallocating existing firefighters to new day staffed stations.
- **Option 1** This would mean that the 12 rural firefighter posts and 28 wholetime firefighter posts from Rhyl and Deeside station would be reallocated to the three new day staffed stations. Cover for Rhyl and Deeside would change to a day crewed model similar to the model which currently operates at Colwyn Bay, Llandudno, Bangor, Caernarfon and Holyhead. This will continue to be in addition to the existing RDS firefighters who crew the second fire engine at all these stations.
 - **Option 2** An alternative model which provides an improved emergency cover by introducing three new day staffed stations, but also realises savings of £1.1 million towards the increase in 2024/25 budget, currently estimated at £6 million thus limiting the year on year increase to £4.9m. This option changes the crewing model at Rhyl and Deeside to a day staffed model, which leaves the night time cover to be provided solely by the RDS firefighters and removes the third appliance from Wrexham. In total this sees a reduction in 22 wholetime firefighter posts.
 - **Option 3.** Changes are in line with option 2, however, only two day staffed stations are introduced and the closure of 5 RDS fire stations is included. This is a reduction of 36 wholetime and 38 RDS firefighter posts realises savings of £2.4m thus limiting the year on year cost increase to £3.6m.

19. It should be noted that option 3 does not have the professional support of the Chief Fire Officer. This is because it does not improve emergency cover, reducing the number of households in North Wales who are able to receive a response within 20 minutes by 2,087. It also removes 74 firefighter posts which reduces the capacity of North Wales Fire and Rescue Service (the Service) to deal with any future Major Incidents. In addition, any possible merger of RDS fire stations can only be considered in the future when the three additional day staffed are in place and providing guaranteed day time emergency cover

CONSULTATION

20. The Authority is obliged to consult the public when considering major service change under a variety of legal obligations including the Equality Act 2010, the Equality Act 2010 (Statutory Duties) (Wales) Regulations 2011, the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act 2015 and common law.

21. In April 2023, the Service engaged The Consultation Institute (tCI), a not for profit, well-established institute promoting high-quality public and stakeholder consultation in the public, private and voluntary sectors. They have been used across the sector including Mid and West Wales Fire and Rescue Authority.

22. The Institute will provide qualified peer review and a Certificate of Consultation Readiness to ensure that the Authority is adopting best practice in line with a Consultation Charter, and that any full public consultation is delivered to the required standard.

23. A key element of the consultation process is that of pre-consultation. This includes focus groups with a range of stakeholders including blue light partners, community groups, local authorities, staff and representative bodies. The purpose of pre-consultation is to gain a wider insight and understanding to inform the decision making and to shape the full consultation.

24. During pre-consultation a variety of different scenarios have been explored through a series of workshops, seminars and focus groups, during which insights and feedback from a wide range of people has been gathered to inform the Authority decision making process. Key themes arising from this engagement included:

- Finance – Understanding the budgetary pressures.
- Future risks – Climate change and new technology may place more demand on resources.
- Prevention and protection – how will our engagement with the public and businesses be affected.
- Communication - Key to aid understanding of the challenges faced and impacts of any proposals.

25. The Service concluded its pre-consultation activities with the guidance and support from the Consultation Institute in June, to ensure consultation readiness in time for a full consultation process.

26. Following approval from Members, it is proposed to commence a public consultation on 21 July to 22 September 2023. The results of which will be presented at the Fire Authority Meeting on 16 October 2023.

IMPLICATIONS

Well-being Objectives	Any options must meet the Authority's obligations under the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015
Budget	No budgetary implications at this stage, however any proposed changes to Emergency cover will have implications for both capital and operational budgets in future years
Legal	The Authority is obliged to consult the public when considering major service change under a variety of legal obligations including the Equality Act 2010, the Equality Act 2010 (Statutory Duties) (Wales) Regulations 2011, the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act 2015 and common law. The main body of the report sets out how the authority proposes to fulfil those obligations
Staffing	No decision has been made yet which will impact on staff. However, in deciding on options to be consulted on staff will be impacted by the proposed changes within the options.
Equalities/Human Rights/ Welsh Language	The impact of these aspects will be assessed at the appropriate point in the development of the Emergency cover proposals through integrated and equality impact assessments.
Risks	Reduces 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	17 July 2023
Lead Officer	Not applicable
Contact Officer	Members Services (members.services@northwalesfire.gov.wales)
Subject	Chair's Report



PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1 This report provides Members with information on the meetings and events attended by the Chair and Deputy Chair of the North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority (the Authority) in their official capacities between April 2023 and June 2023.

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. They also met with Fire Brigade Union (FBU) representatives prior to the Executive Panel meeting held on the 19 June 2023.
- 6 On the 4 April 2023, 2 May 2023, 5 June 2023 and 22 June 2023 the Chair and the Deputy Chair attended meetings of the Emergency Cover Review working group.
- 7 On the 14 April 2023 the Chair and the Deputy Chair attended a meeting of the New Training Centre working group. This was followed up on the 10 May 2023 with visits to the training centres of Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service (FRS) and Greater Manchester FRS.

- 8 On the 14 April 2023 the Chair attended a 'Ceremony of Achievement' for new recruits at Rhyl Fire Station.
- 9 On 24 April 2023 the Chair and the CFO attended a retirement function at Pwllheli Fire Station for Watch Manager Mike Evans who had completed 48 years' service with the North Wales Fire and Rescue Service (the Service).
- 10 On 26 April 2023 the Chair and the CFO attended a hybrid meeting of the Social Partnership Forum chaired by the Deputy Minister.
- 11 On 28 April 2023 the Chair attended the Phoenix 'Ceremony of Achievement' at Llanfairfechan Fire Station and presented certificates to the youngsters who had completed the Phoenix course.
- 12 During the last quarter, the Deputy Chair has attended the 'Ceremony of Achievement' for Phoenix courses held at Ruthin, Flint and Prestatyn Fire Stations. The Deputy Chair also attended a retirement function at Flint Fire Station for Tommy Probert.
- 13 On 27 May 2023, the Chair attended Rhosneigr Fire Station to support the charity car wash event.
- 14 On 16 June 2023 the Chair attended the Phoenix 'Ceremony of Achievement' at Llangefni Fire Station and presented certificates to the youngsters who had completed the Phoenix course.
- 15 During the last quarter the Chair and the CFO have been holding virtual meetings with the North Wales Local Authority Leaders to brief them on the Emergency Cover Review. So far meetings have been held with the leaders of Conwy, Wrexham, Denbighshire and Flintshire authorities.

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	17 July 2023
Lead Officer	Helen MacArthur, ACFO Finance and Resources
Contact Officer	Helen MacArthur
Subject	Internal Audit Arrangements from April 2023



PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1 The purpose of this report is to outline to Members confirmation of the appointment of Mersey Internal Audit Agency as North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority's (the Authority) internal auditor for the period 1 April 2023 – 31 March 2026.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 2 The Accounts and Audit (Wales) Regulations 2014 (the Regulations) require North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority (the Authority) to make proper and effective arrangements for systems of internal control. This includes the arrangements for the management of risk and adequate and effective financial management.
- 3 The Regulations also require an adequate and effective internal audit of the systems of internal control, the findings of which must be reported to Members of the Authority. The Authority is required to approve the Statement of Internal Control annually.
- 4 The previous internal audit arrangements with Conwy Borough Council concluded at the end of 2022/23. Conwy Borough Council no longer have the capacity to provide internal audit services to North Wales Fire and Rescue Service (the Service). Following approval from the Audit Committee at its meeting of the 20 March 2023, a procurement exercise was undertaken to identify a preferred supplier.
- 5 The process was overseen by a member led panel comprising of the Chair and Deputy Chair of the Audit Committee and the Authority's Treasurer who unanimously recommended the appointment of Mersey Internal Audit agency.
- 6 Under the terms of the Constitution, the Audit Committee has responsibility for the appointment of the Authority's internal auditors.

OBSERVATIONS FROM THE AUDIT COMMITTEE

- 7 The Audit Committee met on the 19 June 2023 and received a report following the procurement process. They unanimously supported the Panel's recommendation to appoint Mersey Internal Audit Agency as the Authority's internal auditors for the period 1 April 2023 – 31 March 2026.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- 8 It is recommended that Members:
- i. Note the appointment of Mersey Internal Audit Agency as the Authority's internal audit providers for the financial period 1 April 2023- 31 March 2026.

BACKGROUND

- 9 The Accounts and Audit (Wales) Regulations 2014 (the Regulations) require the Authority to make proper and effective arrangements for systems of internal control. This includes the arrangements for the management of risk and adequate and effective financial management.
- 10 The Regulations also require an adequate and effective internal audit of the systems of internal control, the findings of which must be reported to Members of the Authority. The Authority is required to approve the Statement of Internal Control annually.
- 11 The previous arrangement concluded on 31 March 2023 and it is necessary to make proper provision for period 1 April 2023 – March 2026.

INFORMATION

- 12 Following approval from the Audit Committee on 20 March 2023, a procurement exercise commenced for services to cover the period 1 April 2023 – March 2026 using the public sector Crown Commercial Services Framework for Audit and Assurance Services.
- 13 Suppliers on this framework not only have the requisite skills and expertise but have also demonstrated the appropriate standards in wider areas such as modern slavery and social value.
- 14 The exercise involved the development of a comprehensive service specification and financial assessment to ensure that the Authority achieves value for money.

- 15 The member panel comprising of the Chair and Deputy Chair of the Audit Committee and the Authority's Treasurer unanimously recommended the appointment of Mersey Internal Audit Agency (MIAA). This recommendation is supported by officers following an assessment of the information provided by MIAA within the tender submission.
- 16 Mersey Internal Audit Agency was formed in 1990 as part of the NHS shared service to provide internal audit services across NHS bodies. The scope of the work has now grown to include a broad range of services from internal audit to governance and risk management to a diverse range of public sector bodies including local authorities, Fire and Rescue Services and Police Forces.
- 17 The MIAA team is well placed to deliver the services required. The MIAA submission demonstrated a commitment to its staff through the Investor in People accreditation. The bilingual engagement lead will provide day to day support for the contract.
- 18 The panel received a presentation on the proposed audit strategy and noted the risk-based approach adopted by MIAA, whilst also recognising the need for flexibility to adapt to evolving risks over the period of the plan.
- 19 The panel was satisfied that MIAA had the capacity and expertise to deliver their planned work within the budget allocated.

IMPLICATIONS

Wellbeing Objectives	This report links to the Authority's long-term well-being objective which is "To facilitate high quality, responsive and better integrated fire and rescue services so that prevention activity and emergency response can continue to be available when and where required, affordably, equitably and on the basis of risk."
Budget	Provision has been made for internal audit services within the budget setting arrangements
Legal	An effective internal audit arrangement is a requirement of the Accounts and Audit (Wales) 2014 Regulations
Staffing	N/A
Equalities/ Human Rights/ Welsh Language	The engagement lead with MIAA is bi-lingual and reports will be subject to normal translation processes.
Risks	<p>The Statement of Assurance is submitted in compliance with the Accounts & Audit Regulations and the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards. Without such assurance from the Members would be unaware of the adequacy & effectiveness of the corporate governance, risk management & internal control arrangements and its associated ability to achieve its objectives.</p> <p>Any significant issues or weaknesses identified by Internal Audit would not be considered in the preparation of the Annual Governance Statement.</p>

Report to	North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority	
Date	17 July 2023	
Lead Officer	Treasurer, Dafydd Edwards	
Contact Officer	Head of Finance, Helen Howard	
Subject	Treasury Management Activity and Actual Prudential Indicators for 2022/2023	

PURPOSE OF REPORT

1. To inform Members of the treasury management activity and prudential indicators for North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority (the Authority) during the 2022/23 financial year. This report is a requirement of the Prudential Code (the Code).

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

2. The Authority's treasury management activities are regulated by professional codes, statutes and guidance. The borrowing position at 31 March 2023 was £26.5m which is within the limit approved by members. The value of short-term loans was £8.7m which is within the limit set within the strategy. No variable rate loans were held during the financial year.

OBSERVATIONS FROM THE EXECUTIVE PANEL OR AUDIT COMMITTEE

3. The Audit Committee considered the Treasury Management activity and 2022/23 Prudential Indicators at its meeting of 19 June 2023. The Audit Committee noted the activity and endorsed the approval of the 2022/23 Prudential Indicators.

RECOMMENDATION

4. It is recommended that Members:
 - i) note the treasury management activity; and
 - ii) approve the final prudential indicators for 2022/23.

INTRODUCTION

5. The Authority's treasury management activity is regulated by professional codes, statutes and relevant guidance. The Authority has adopted the Chartered Institute of Public Finance Accountancy's Treasury Management in the Public Services: Code of Practice (the CIPFA Code) which requires the Authority to approve treasury management semi-annual and annual reports.

6. The Authority's Treasury Management Strategy for 2022/23 was approved at a meeting of 14 March 2022. The Authority has borrowed substantial sums of money and is therefore exposed to the financial risks including the revenue effect of changing interest rates. The successful identification, monitoring and control of the risk remains central to the Authority's treasury management strategy.
7. The 2021 Prudential Code includes a requirement for local authorities to provide a Capital Strategy, a summary document approved by the Authority covering capital expenditure and financing, treasury management and non-treasury investments. The Authority's Capital Strategy, complying with CIPFA's requirement, was approved at a meeting on 14 March 2022.

EXTERNAL CONTEXT

Economic background

8. The war in Ukraine continued to keep global inflation above central bank targets and the UK economic outlook remained relatively weak with the chance of a mild recession. The economic backdrop during the January to March period continued to be characterised by high energy and commodity prices and high inflation,
9. The Bank of England increased the official Bank Rate to 4.25% during the financial year, from 0.75% in March 2022.
10. **Credit review:** Following credit changes by the ratings agency, the Authority's treasury advisors, Arlingclose, reduced its recommended maximum duration limit for unsecured deposits for all UK and Non-UK banks/institutions on its counterparty list to 35 days as a precautionary measure. The banks/institutions used by the Authority all remained on the list.
11. As market volatility is expected to remain a feature, at least in the near term and, as ever, the institutions and durations on the Authority's counterparty list recommended by Arlingclose remains under constant review.

LOCAL CONTEXT

12. The day to day decisions on borrowing are delegated to the Authority's Finance officers, who are required to ensure the most appropriate form of borrowing depending on the prevailing interest rates at the time. This includes the use of shorter-term fixed rates, which may provide lower cost opportunities in the short/medium term.

13. A cautious approach is taken to the investment of surplus funds. Cash deposits required in order to maintain working capital are made with banks or building societies. Other vehicles are only used for longer term investments.

Borrowing Activity

14. As outlined in the Treasury Management Strategy, the Authority's chief objective when borrowing has been to strike an appropriately low risk balance between securing lower interest costs and achieving cost certainty over the period for which funds are required, with flexibility to renegotiate loans should the Authority's long-term plans change being 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 and, where practicable, to maintain borrowing and investments below their underlying levels, sometimes known as internal borrowing.

15. The cost of both long and short-term borrowing rose dramatically over the year, with rates at the end of March almost 4% higher than those at the beginning of April. Rate rises have been driven primarily by inflation and the need for central banks to control this by raising interest rates. Rates have now fallen from September peaks but remain volatile and well above recent historical norms.

16. The increase in interest rates has had an impact on interest costs for this year, due to the requirement to take out new loans amounting to £10m. These were necessary to replace existing maturing loans and to fund the capital programme. The effect of the higher interest rates will continue to have an ongoing impact on the revenue budget.

17. The outstanding loan debt as at 31 March 2023 was £26.46m. Loans are taken out to finance the Authority's capital programme. A further analysis of maturity profiles is provided in Appendix A.

18. The Public Works Loans Board (PWLB) loans held as at 31 March 2023 are detailed below and amounted to £20.46m:

Organisation	Percentage Analysis	Amount £
PWLB (1 to 2 years)	31.2%	£6.39m
PWLB (3 to 5 years)	38.9%	£7.96m
PWLB (6 to 10 years)	7.9%	£1.62m
PWLB (10 and more years)	22.0%	£4.49m
Total PWLB	100%	£20.46m

19. During the year, new PWLB loans totalling £10m were taken out. The loan portfolio includes Equal Instalment of Principal loans (EIP). Overall, the loans held by the Authority increased by £2.1m compared to the previous year.

20. In addition to borrowing through the PWLB, the Authority had £6.0m in short term loans taken out with other local authorities at year end, as detailed below:

Organisation	Percentage Analysis	Amount
Tameside Metropolitan Borough Council	50.0%	£3.0m
Warwickshire County Council	50.0%	£3.0m
Total Short-Term Borrowing	100%	£6.0m

21. These loans provided a low-cost short-term option for the Authority, with interest rates averaging 1.3%, which compares favourably with the prevailing PWLB rates.

22. The position at 31 March 2023 was that 22.7% of loans were short term loans taken out with other Local Authorities, and 4% were PWLB loans that were due to mature within 12 months. The total loans maturing within 12 months as at 31 March 2023 was 26.7% compared to the indicator of 60%. This approach is consistent with the advice of the Authority's Treasury Management Advisors.

23. The Treasury Management Strategy confirms that the borrowing portfolio should have a maximum of 35% of debt in variable loans, with up to 100% of loans having fixed terms. During 2022/23 the Authority only borrowed on fixed rate terms due to prevailing interest rates and to provide certainty.
24. The total outstanding loans at the year end of £26.46m were below the approved capital financing requirement (CFR) but exceeded the forecast year-end position. On the advice of the professional advisors, the Authority took advantage of prevailing market conditions and secured loans at favourable rates to ensure that maturing debt could be repaid and investments of £4.1m were held at the year end. The net borrowing position was, therefore, £23.4m.
25. The total interest paid during the financial year was £0.465m, compared to the budget of £0.325m which reflects the significant interest rate increases during the financial year.

Investments

26. 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.
27. The Authority holds invested funds, representing income received in advance of expenditure, plus balances and reserves held. During the year 2022/23, the Authority's investment balances ranged between £0m and £4.1m, due to timing differences between income and expenditure. All investments were overnight treasury deposits.
28. The investment strategy for 2022/23 approved by the Authority on 14 March 2022 included approval of the following criteria for counterparties:

Institution	Description	Limit
Banks	All UK banks and their subsidiaries that have good ratings (Fitch or equivalent). This is currently defined as long term (BBB)	£5m
Central Government	Debt management Office	Unlimited
Money Market Funds (MMF)	Only in conjunction with advice from Arlingclose.	£1m per fund
Local Authorities	All except those subject to limitation of council tax and precepts under Part 1 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 (and with advice from Arlingclose).	£2m
Building Societies	Building societies with a rating (as for the banking sector).	£2m
Building Societies (Assets £1bn)	Building societies without a rating but with assets of £1 billion or more.	£2m/ 9 months

29. 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.

30. 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. As the Authority only holds funds for working capital purposes the default position is to utilise the Authority's deposit accounts. Where appropriate advice and guidance is sought from the Authority's professional advisors, Arlingclose.

31. The Bank Rate has increased from 0.75% at the beginning of the year to 4.25% at the end of March 2023. Short-dated cash rates, which had ranged between 0.7% - 1.5% at the beginning of April, rose by around 3.5% for overnight/7-day maturities.

Prudential Indicators

32. The Authority's estimated prudential indicators for 2022/23 were approved as part of the Capital Strategy at the meeting on 14 March 2022. The Authority is required by the Prudential Code to subsequently approve the actual value of those prudential indicators after the year end.

33. Appendix A provides a schedule of all the mandatory prudential indicators. The table below confirms the key limits approved by the Authority and the outturn for 2022/23:

	2022/23 Indicator	2022/23 Actual
Borrowing position	£23.895m	£26.460m
Capital Financing Requirement	£29.389m	£28.396m

34. The Capital Financing Requirement (CFR) shows the Authority's underlying need to borrow for a capital purpose. In the short term the borrowing requirement may exceed the capital financing requirement due to the effect of cash and investments. The table above shows the gross borrowing position was lower than the actual CFR for 2022/23 by £1.94m.

35. The Authorised Limit is the affordable borrowing limit required by section 3 of the Local Government Act 2003. The table below demonstrates that during 2022/23 the Authority has maintained its gross borrowing within its Authorised Limit.

36. The Operational Boundary is the expected borrowing position of the Authority during the year, and periods where the actual position is either below or over the Boundary is acceptable subject to the Authorised Limit not being breached.

	2022/23
Indicator - Authorised Limit	£31.389m
Indicator - Operational Boundary	£29.389m
Maximum borrowing position during the year	£26.738m
Minimum borrowing position during the year	£20.244m

COMPLIANCE

37. All treasury management activities undertaken during the year complied fully with the CIPFA Code of Practice and the Authority's approved Treasury Management Strategy.
38. Compliance with the authorised limit and operational boundary for external debt is demonstrated in the table above.

IMPLICATIONS

Wellbeing Objectives	This report links to NWFRA'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 into 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 and prudent treasury management activity by the Authority's Finance officers, as advised by treasury advisors, is to mitigate this risk.

Appendix A

Prudential Indicators

		2022/23 Estimated Indicator £'000	2022/23 Actual £'000
1	Capital Expenditure	2,916	3,366
2	Capital Financing Requirement	29,389	28,787
3	Borrowing	23,895	26,460
4	Authorised Limit	31,389	30,787
5	Operational Boundary	29,389	28,787
6	Ratio of Financing Costs to Net Expenditure	5.7%	6.2%
7	Investments	0	4,107
8	Fixed Interest rate loans as a % of Total Borrowing	100%	100%
9	Variable rate loans as a % of Total Borrowing	0%	0%
10	Maturity Structure of Fixed Rate Borrowing		
	Under 12 months	0% - 60%	26.7%
	12 months to 2 years	0% - 45%	4.5%
	2 years to 5 years	0% - 45%	38.9%
	5 years to 10 years	0% - 75%	7.9%
	10 years and above	0% - 100%	22.0%

*Mae'r ddogfen yma ar gael yn Gymraeg***Agenda Item 10**

Report to	North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority
Date	17 July 2023
Lead Officer	Helen MacArthur, ACFO Finance and Resources
Contact Officer	Keith Williams (Audit Manager)- 01492 576217 keith.williams@conwy.gov.uk
Subject	Internal Audit Annual Report 2022/23

**PURPOSE OF REPORT**

- 1 Under the terms of the Accounts and Audit (Wales) Regulations 2014 Part 3 5. (2), the North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority (the Authority) is required annually to conduct a review of the effectiveness of its system of Internal Control. Internal Audit is an integral part of that system and is a significant contributor to the preparation of the Annual Governance Statement.
- 2 CIPFA's Public Sector Internal Audit Standards 2017 require the Head of Internal Audit to provide the Audit Committee with assurance on the whole system of internal control, including the adequacy of risk management and corporate governance arrangements.
- 3 The report analyses the work of the Internal Audit Service for 2022/23 and contains the assurance statement based on the work of Internal Audit during the year ended March 2023.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 4 The Head of Internal Audit was able to provide assurance, based on the internal audit work undertaken, together with our maintained knowledge of the organisation and its procedures, that the Authority has effective corporate governance, risk management and internal control arrangements to manage the achievement of the Authority's objectives.
- 5 There was a planned allocation of 58 days (50 days plus 8 c/f from 2021/22). The report identifies that 48 days of Internal Audit work was performed during 2022/23. As a result, it has been agreed that 10 days will be utilised in 2023/24 to undertake follow up audits of Payroll & Creditors.

- 6 The audit reviews provide a positive level of assurance upon the adequacy of the systems of internal control in place, although 20 recommendations have been made in the year to address some weaknesses. A formal follow up process is in place to ensure that the recommendations are implemented within agreed timescales.
- 7 The work of Internal Audit has not identified any weaknesses that would qualify this opinion and there are no significant issues that are relevant to the preparation of the Annual Governance Statement.
- 8 The report also provides assurance that the Internal Audit Service operates in compliance with the UK Public Sector Internal Audit Standards to enable the Authority to take assurance from this opinion.

OBSERVATIONS FROM THE EXECUTIVE PANEL OR AUDIT COMMITTEE

- 9 This report was received and considered by the Audit Committee at its meeting of 19 June 2023. The Audit Committee noted the report, including the assessment by the Head of Audit and Procurement, which confirmed that the Authority's internal control processes for 2022/23 were adequate.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- 10 It is recommended that Members:
 - i) note the content of Head of Audit and Procurement's Annual Report and the overall 'opinion' upon the adequacy and effectiveness of the Authority's framework of governance, risk management and control.

BACKGROUND

The Role of Internal Audit

- 11 Under the terms of The Accounts and Audit (Wales) Regulations 2014, Fire Authorities have a statutory responsibility to maintain "an adequate and effective system of internal audit."
- 12 The role of Internal Audit Services is to provide management with an objective assessment of whether systems and controls are working properly. It is a key part of the organisation's internal control system because it measures and evaluates the adequacy and effectiveness of other controls so that:

- The Audit Committee and senior management are aware of the extent to which they can rely on the whole system; and
 - Individual managers are aware of how reliable the systems and controls for which they are responsible are.
- 13 The internal control system comprises the whole network of systems and controls established to manage the Authority, to ensure that its objectives are met. It includes financial and other controls and also arrangements for ensuring that the Authority is achieving value for money from its activities.
- 14 In accordance with the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards the Head of Audit is required to deliver an annual internal audit opinion and report that can be used by the Authority to inform its governance statement.

INFORMATION

Internal Audit Opinion 2022/23

- 15 The Head of Audit is satisfied that the internal audit work undertaken, together with our maintained knowledge of the organisation and its procedures allows a reasonable conclusion to be made, as to the adequacy and effectiveness of the Authority's risk management, control and governance processes.
- 16 It is the Head of Audit's opinion that the Authority has **adequate and effective control processes** to manage its achievement of the Authority's objectives for the 12-month period to 31 March 2023.
- 17 In giving an audit opinion, it should be noted that assurance can never be absolute. The most that the Internal Audit Service can provide to the Audit Committee is a reasonable assurance based upon the work undertaken in that year, that there are no major weaknesses other than those identified.
- 18 In addition, in arriving at our opinion, we have taken into account:
- The results of all audits undertaken during the year ended 31 March 2023;
 - The results of follow-up action taken in respect of audits from previous years;
 - Whether any Critical or Major category of recommendations have not been accepted by management and the consequent risks;
 - The effects of any material changes in the Authority's objectives or activities;
 - Matters arising from previous reports to the Executive Panel or Audit Committee; and

- The resource constraints placed upon Internal Audit that have impinged on the Service's ability to meet the full internal audit needs of the Authority.

19 The overall audit opinion may be used in the preparation of the Annual Governance Statement.

Summary of Work Supporting the Audit Opinion 2022/23

20 A schedule giving an audit opinion of the adequacy and effectiveness of internal control processes and a summary of the key messages in respect of all the audit assignments undertaken during 2022/23 is attached at **Appendix A**.

21 The schedule summarises the audit work, opinions and number of recommendations made in respect of each area reviewed, which form the basis of the assurance given to Audit Committee of the overall adequacy and effectiveness of the Authority's governance, risk management and internal control frameworks for 2022/23.

22 Where relevant, internal audit reports are categorised to give an audit opinion of the internal control environment for that particular system or establishment. The audit opinions on the assignments are categorised as follows:

- High Assurance
- Satisfactory Assurance
- Limited Assurance
- No Assurance

In support of the audit opinions, the recommendations made during the year have been categorised as Critical, Major, Moderate and Minor, in accordance with the way in which the Authority assesses and measures risk.

23 Two audit reports and a follow up audit was completed during the year covering:

- **Payroll (Key Controls)** – A review was undertaken to provide a level of assurance to management that internal controls are operating effectively, potential risks well managed and corporate objectives are being achieved. The audit included a review of the following areas:
 - Policies and office procedures,
 - iTrent System access rights,
 - Starters & Leavers,
 - Retained pay & amendments to wholetime pay,
 - HMRC submissions,

- Deductions from pay,
- BACS payments,
- Overpayments,
- Payroll control accounts and reconciliations.

The audit made eight recommendations and provided a *Satisfactory* level of assurance.

- **Creditors (Key Controls)** - A review was undertaken to provide a level of assurance to management that internal controls are operating effectively, potential risks well managed and corporate objectives are being achieved. The audit included a review of the following areas:
 - Policies & Procedures,
 - Authorised Signatories and Declarations of Interests,
 - Ordering of works, goods and services,
 - Receipt of Goods and Services,
 - Invoice Checks, Duplicate Payments & Discrepancies,
 - BACS Payments,
 - Creditor Control Account and Bank Reconciliations,
 - Performance Indicators.

The audit made 12 recommendations and provided a *Satisfactory* level of assurance.

- 24 The outcome of each audit, and the evaluation of the adequacy of the internal control environment, is based on the number of recommendations and their risk rating. All audits undertaken during the year were assessed as providing positive levels of assurance.
- 25 To address the weaknesses identified during the audit reviews, twenty recommendations have been made. Action plans setting out the agreed response to the audit recommendations were issued with the audit reports and these have been returned from Fire and Rescue Authority management, completed with the action to be taken to ensure implementation of the recommendations. Management agreed to implement eighteen of the audit recommendations. In the Creditors audit report, two recommendations (Recs 8 and 11) were categorised as *Minor*, and management consider that compensating controls are in place.
- 26 To comply with CIPFA's Public Sector Internal Audit Standards a formal follow up process is in operation within the Section to confirm that the recommendations made in Internal Audit reports have been implemented by management within agreed timescales. A follow up audit will normally take place six months after the issue of the final report.

- 27 A schedule of the follow up audits conducted during 2022/23 is attached at **Appendix B**. It demonstrates the number of recommendations accepted and subsequently implemented by management in each area and reveals changes that impact on the original audit opinion. It is evident that there was an improvement in the levels of internal control with regards to the Emergency Fire Appliance Driving (EFAD) audit completed in 2021/22, with a revised audit opinion of *High Assurance*.
- 28 During 2022/23, 48 audit days were provided in comparison with the planned allocation of 58 days, as indicated in the annual audit plan. A summary of audit activity is attached at **Appendix C** and shows the planned allocation of audit resources in terms of allocated days over departments and services and compares actual work done for 2022/23 with the plan. It has been agreed with management that the balance of 10 days will be utilised in 2023/24 to undertake follow ups of the Payroll and Creditors audits.
- 29 In accordance with the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards, the plan needs to be flexible to be able to reflect and respond to the changing risks and priorities of the Authority. The plan was reviewed during the year and updated as necessary. The Central Stores audit was cancelled at the request of management due to the fact that the Stores Manager retired in February 2023 at the time the audit was scheduled to commence, and the work pressures that staff were under.

Compliance with Public Sector Internal Audit Standards

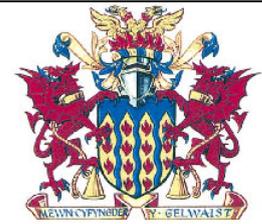
- 30 Internal Audit employ a risk-based approach to determining the audit needs of the Authority at the start of the year and use a risk-based methodology in planning and conducting our audit assignments. The work of Internal Audit Services has been performed in compliance with the UK Public Sector Internal Audit Standards 2017.
- 31 The Internal Audit Service has developed a Quality Assurance and Improvement Programme (QAIP), which covers all aspects of internal audit activity and enables conformance with all aspects of the PSIAS to be evaluated.

- 32 The Public Sector Internal Audit Standards (PSIAS) introduced a requirement for an external assessment of all internal audit services, which must be conducted at least once every five years by a qualified, independent reviewer from outside of the organisation. An assessment of the Internal Audit Service has recently been completed by the Head of Regional Audit Service (Bridgend CBC, Merthyr Tydfil CBC, Vale of Glamorgan Council and Rhondda Cynon Taf CBC). The Final Report was issued in December 2022, and it confirmed that the results of the assessment are positive and the Service 'generally conforms' with the PSIAS and Code of Ethics.

IMPLICATIONS

Wellbeing Objectives	This report links to the Authority's long-term well-being objective which is "To facilitate high quality, responsive and better integrated fire and rescue services so that prevention activity and emergency response can continue to be available when and where required, affordably, equitably and on the basis of risk."
Budget	Internal Audit Services is provided as part of an SLA and within budget constraints.
Legal	N/A
Staffing	N/A
Equalities/Human Rights/ Welsh Language	N/A
Risks	<p>The Statement of Assurance is submitted in compliance with the Accounts and Audit Regulations and the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards. Without such assurance from the Head of Internal Audit Services, Members would be unaware of the adequacy and effectiveness of the corporate governance, risk management and internal control arrangements and its associated ability to achieve its objectives.</p> <p>Any significant issues or weaknesses identified by Internal Audit would not be considered in the preparation of the Annual Governance Statement.</p>

Report to	North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority
Date	17 July 2023
Lead Officer	Stewart Forshaw, Deputy Chief Fire Officer
Contact Officer	Anthony Jones – Head of Planning, Performance and Transformation
Subject	Annual Governance Statement 2022/23



PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1 This report is to present to Members the draft Annual Governance Statement for 2022/23.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 2 The CIPFA/Solace Delivering Good Governance in Local Government Framework (2016) (the Framework) requires the North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority (the Authority) to publish an Annual Governance Statement.
- 3 The draft Annual Governance Statement for 2022/23 is set out in Appendix 1 and has been prepared in accordance with the principles set out in the Framework. The forward work programme for 2023/24 is contained within the draft Annual Government Statement.
- 4 The Annual Governance Statement will be published as part of the production of the statutory financial statements for 2022/23. An assessment will be made by the external auditor to confirm whether it is consistent with the financial statements and has been produced in line with the Framework.
- 5 Following this assessment, a final version of the Annual Governance Statement will be presented to the Authority for approval and subsequent internal and external publication.

RECOMMENDATION

- 6 Members are asked to:
 - (i) note the governance arrangements outlined within the draft 2022/23 Annual Governance Statement;
 - (ii) note the forward work plan for 2023/24; and
 - (iii) approve the draft 2022/23 Annual Government Statement.

BACKGROUND

- 7 Since 2010/11 all local government bodies have been required, by the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015, to prepare an Annual Governance Statement which is published as part of the Statutory Accounts.
- 8 The purpose of the Annual Governance Statement is to assess and demonstrate that there is a sound system of corporate governance throughout the organisation.

INFORMATION

- 9 In 2016, CIPFA and Solace published a new governance framework, Developing Good Governance in Local Government: Framework (the Framework). The Framework is structured around seven principles of governance which enables the Authority to demonstrate its overall arrangements and set out how it has discharged its responsibilities.
- 10 The purpose of the Annual Governance Statement is to set out the Authority's arrangements to ensure that:
 - (i) business is conducted in accordance with all relevant laws and regulations;
 - (ii) public money is safeguarded and properly accounted for; and
 - (iii) resources are used economically, efficiently and effectively to achieve agreed priorities which benefit local people.
- 11 The draft 2022/23 Annual Governance Statement is set out in Appendix 1. It provides an overview of the governance arrangements and confirms the work plan for 2023/24.
- 12 The Annual Governance Statement is reviewed by Audit Wales to confirm that it is consistent with its knowledge of the Authority and the financial statements.
- 13 Once published, performance against the forward work plan 23/24 will be monitored through the Service Leadership Teams' Performance Board on a quarterly basis.

IMPLICATIONS

Wellbeing Objectives	This report links to the Authority's long-term well-being objectives and demonstrates the governance arrangements in place to enable North Wales Fire and Rescue Service (the Service) to provide emergency responses and prevention work well in to the future.
Budget	Not applicable
Legal	The Annual Governance Statement has been prepared in accordance with the prescribed standards.
Staffing	None
Equalities/Human Rights/Welsh Language	None
Risks	A sound governance framework supports the Authority's risk management arrangements.

Annual Governance Statement 2022–2023

Awdurdod Tân ac Achub Gogledd Cymru
North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority



Mae'r ddogfen yma ar gael yn y Gymraeg
This document is also available in Welsh

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Delivering Good Governance Framework

The Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy/Solace Delivering Good Governance in Local Government Framework (2016) (the Framework) requires the Fire and Rescue Authority to publish an Annual Governance Statement, to demonstrate that:

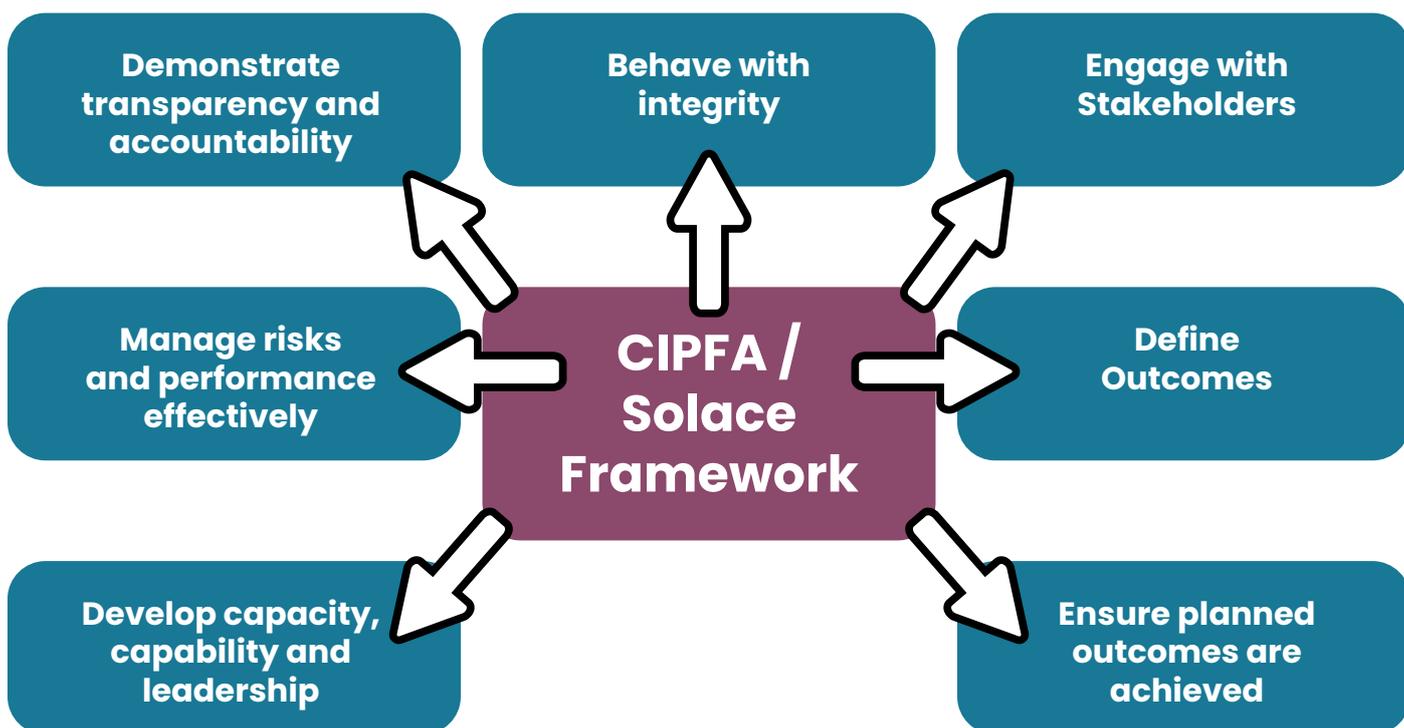
- business is conducted in accordance with all relevant laws and regulations
- public money is safeguarded and properly accounted for
- resources are used economically, efficiently and effectively to achieve agreed priorities which benefit local people.

To fulfil its wide range of functions, the Authority must satisfy political, economic, social and environmental objectives over the short, medium and longer term. This subjects it to a different set of external and internal constraints and incentives from those found in the private sector, all of which affect its governance arrangements. A key piece of legislation in Wales is the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015, which requires the Authority to consider the longer term in making its decisions and to work collaboratively with other public bodies to improve well-being in Wales.

Stakeholders are, therefore, interested in issues such as:

- whether the Authority's planned outputs have been delivered and outcomes achieved
- whether this has been done in an efficient, economic, effective and equitable manner.

The core principles underpinning the CIPFA/Solace Framework are set out below. The following pages detail how the Authority is meeting these principles.



Key Contributors to Developing and Maintaining the Governance Framework

<p>Fire and Rescue Authority</p>	<p>Provides the strategic leadership, political interface and corporate challenge in relation to the provision of fire and rescue services across North Wales, encouraging public participation and conducting its affairs in an open and transparent manner. It agrees the Improvement and Wellbeing Plan, and the revenue and capital budgets</p>
<p>Executive Panel</p>	<p>Monitors the performance of the Service and makes recommendations to the Authority on its key policies including the Improvement and Wellbeing Plan. The Panel reviews the strategic risk register.</p>
<p>Fire Authority Working Groups</p>	<p>Undertakes detailed work associated with the Authority's planning and budget-setting process. It submits its observations to the Executive Panel which in turn makes recommendations for improvement/risk reduction/well-being objectives to the Authority.</p>
<p>Audit Committee</p>	<p>Provides independent review of the governance, risk management and control frameworks and oversees the financial reporting, including the Treasury Management Strategy and annual accounts.</p>
<p>Standards Committee</p>	<p>Promotes and maintains high standards of conduct by Members of the Authority and oversees the whistle-blowing policy for complaints against Members of the Authority. Also, where statute permits, to receive reports and complaints about Members and to conduct or oversee investigations and make recommendations to the Authority.</p>
<p>Service Leadership Team</p>	<p>Sets and leads the implementation of the governance standards across the Service. Receives the annual improvement plan and feeds into the annual self-assessment.</p>
<p>Internal Audit</p>	<p>Provides an annual independent and objective opinion on the adequacy and effectiveness of internal control, risk management and governance arrangements. Investigates fraud and irregularity.</p>



Summary: Governance Arrangements

The Authority is required to review the effectiveness of its arrangements each year to ensure that there is a sound system of governance. The key contributors to this process are summarised on page 2 and include:

- Regularly reviewing the effectiveness of the Authority's Constitution.
- Having an Authority and committee structure that:
 - ◊ monitors the effectiveness of risk management arrangements
 - ◊ regularly reviews the governance arrangements
 - ◊ considers and reviews internal and external audit strategies, plans and reports
 - ◊ reviews, scrutinises and approves the annual statement of accounts.
- Having an Executive Board that:
 - ◊ provides leadership on governance
 - ◊ contributes to the completion and review of the Annual Governance Statement
 - ◊ provides clear direction to the Service and senior managers.
- The use of information from various sources to inform the governance arrangements, for example:
 - ◊ Improvement and performance board reports
 - ◊ risk management arrangements
 - ◊ external regulator reports
 - ◊ the Internal Audit Annual Report.

Achievements against the core principles are set out within pages 6-12. The Authority's agreed improvement actions for 2022/23 are contained on pages 13-16, which confirms the progress made.

Governance Arrangements

The new Authority was established in the summer of 2022 following local elections. A number of Member engagement days were implemented to support the induction of new authority members, with a focus on the assurance and governance arrangements in the Authority.

The Fire and Rescue Authority's normal schedule of meetings continue to be attended remotely. This arrangement continues to work effectively and is likely to continue until such time as a technical solution can be found to enable webcasting and simultaneous English translation of Authority meetings if some participants wish to attend in person and others remotely.

In early 2023, the Authority has established three working-groups to support the development of three key organisational priorities:

- The Emergency Cover Review Working Group
- The Environmental Strategy Working Group
- The new Training and Development Centre Working Group.

At its meeting in March 2023 the Authority approved a revised Corporate Plan 2021- 24 which:

- confirmed the Authority's existing long-term objectives
- outlined what actions were planned for 2023/24
- reflected the key challenges facing the Authority
- took account of recent Audit Wales findings and recommendations
- considered the ongoing work of the Public Services Boards
- ensured preparedness for an updated National Framework and recommendations from the Well-being of Future Generations Commissioner's office
- aligned with the Authority's revenue budget, capital plan and medium-term financial plan.

The Service Leadership Team (SLT), chaired by the Chief Fire Officer, comprises of Principal Officers, Area Managers and Heads of Department. It meets as a Performance Board to scrutinise performance, and as an Improvement Board to provide challenge and senior oversight of programmes, projects and policies.

Following the introduction of a new organisational structure in April 2022, a 'light touch review' of the structure was completed in line with its first anniversary. Ensuring staff consultation, this has resulted in the organisation creating additional capacity, more efficient and effective working, whilst reducing costs.

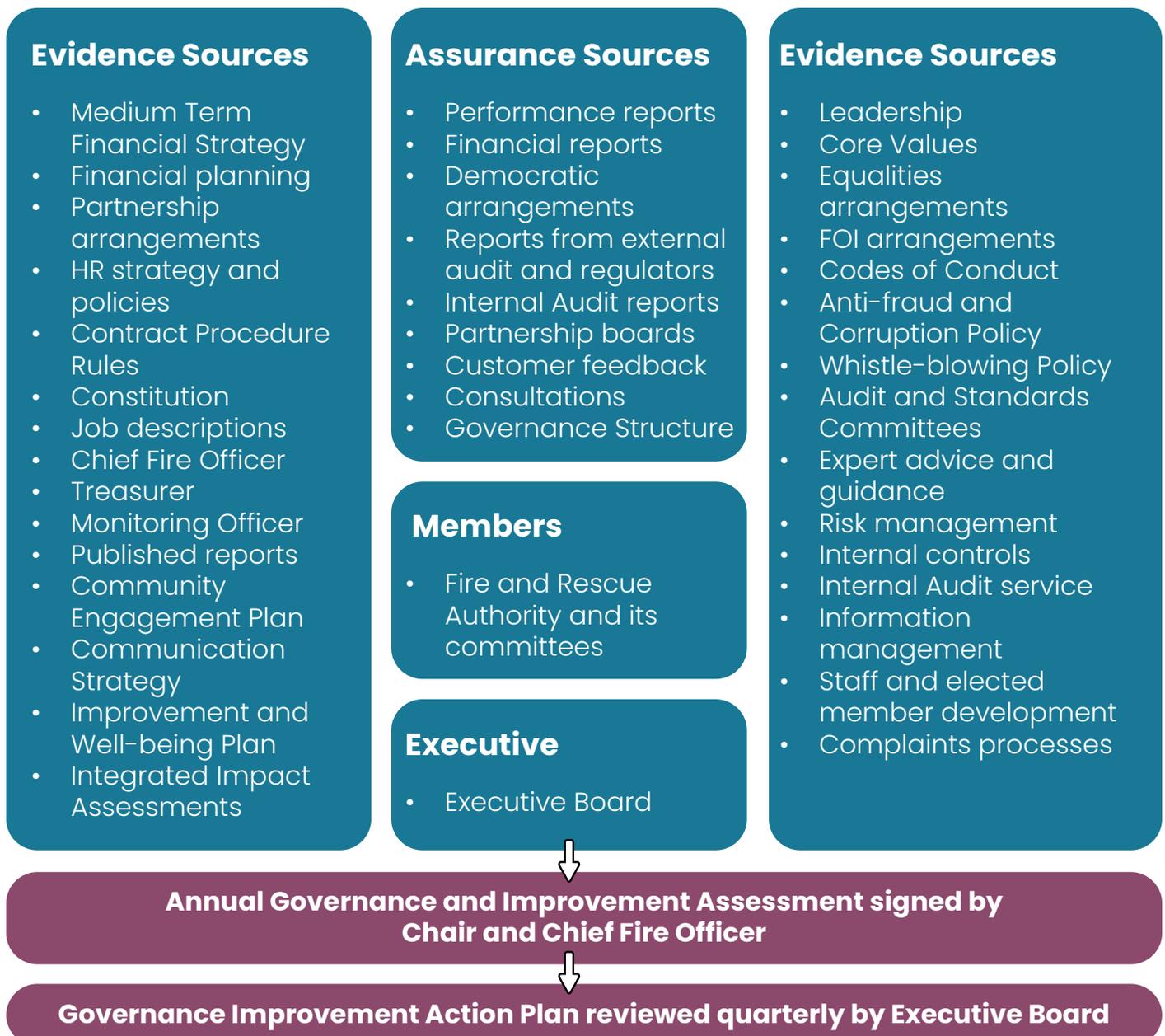
The Service Governance Structure of committees and groups, reporting up to SLT, are now embedded across the organisation. Demonstrating robust governance across reporting, monitoring, scrutiny and decision-making within all areas of the organisation.

The importance of keeping staff informed and engaged continues to be a key priority, internal communications have increased considerably e.g. through the Workplace Facebook platform, an enhanced programme of visits by Principal Officers to Fire Stations and departments, and regular meetings with middle and Supervisory Manager groups to cascade information on progress to date and to discuss what is expected from staff at all levels.

Summary of the Authority's Governance Framework

Principles of Good Governance

- Behaving with integrity, demonstrating strong commitment to ethical values, and respecting the rule of law
- Ensuring openness and comprehensive stakeholder engagement
- Defining outcomes in terms of sustainable economic, social and environmental benefits
- Determining the interventions necessary to optimise the achievement of the intended outcomes
- Developing the Authority's capacity, including the capability of its leadership and employees
- Managing risks and performance through robust internal control and strong financial management
- Implementing good practices in transparency, reporting and audit to deliver effective accountability



Core Principles

Behaving with integrity, demonstrating strong commitment to ethical values, and respecting the rule of law

- The Constitution sets out the responsibilities of the Fire and Rescue Authority and its committees and includes the Scheme of Delegation to Officers.
- The Monitoring Officer ensures that decisions taken are within the law and comply with the provisions of the Constitution.
- The Constitution includes the Code of Conduct for Members and this is monitored by the Standards Committee.
- Where necessary legal advice is sought to inform decision making.
- Codes of Conduct for Members and Officers are in place, which requires the declaration of business interests and recording of the receipt of gifts and/or hospitality.
- The Authority has a procedure to receive and respond to any complaints received. A summary report of complaints and appreciations is provided to the Fire and Rescue Authority annually.
- Key policies are in place to prevent and minimise the risk of fraud. Policies include: Whistleblowing Policy, Anti-Fraud and Corruption Policy and
- Financial Regulations and Contract Procedure Rules. Where irregularity is suspected arrangements are in place to ensure that it is thoroughly investigated.
- The recruitment policy, induction and training processes incorporate personal behaviours with ethical values. The core values of the Service are fully embedded and include; service to the community, striving for excellence, people and diversity and inclusivity.
- Attainment of the Public Health Wales Corporate Health Bronze and Platinum awards.
- The Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Steering Committee was established to consider matters relating to equality, diversity and cultural issues.
- Disciplinary cases and any allegations of wrongdoing are investigated in accordance with the Service's Discipline Handbook.
- A Strategic Equality Plan is published within our Annual Performance Assessment in compliance with the Equality Act 2010. Equality objectives are reviewed annually and monitored throughout the year.
- As part of our commitment to the Welsh language, all new members of staff are required to achieve a minimum of Level 2 Welsh language skills.
- The Improvement and Well-being Plan is published on the Authority's website. This details the improvement objectives as required by the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2009, and well-being objectives in accordance with the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015.
- Safeguarding policy and procedure is in place to refer vulnerable people the Service come into contact with, to other agencies.
- All departmental plans, where applicable, demonstrate alignment to the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015
- The Service has introduced a new confidential reporting line 'Safecall' for staff.

Behaving with integrity, demonstrating strong commitment to ethical values, and respecting the rule of law

- All meetings are advertised and full Authority meetings are webcast. Agendas and papers are available on the Authority's website.
- Information is published on the Authority's website as part of the publication scheme. Easy read/read speak/Welsh versions of documents are provided.
 - ◊ Public consultation arrangements are in place to invite the views of stakeholders prior to developing and implementing key changes. This includes consultation on the Improvement and Well-being Plan.
 - ◊ The Service has embarked on an Emergency Cover Review and it is working towards best practice in preparation for any public consultation by working with the Consultation Institute. This involves ensuring the Service conduct a thorough stakeholder analysis as part its pre-consultation preparations so they can fully understand who may be impacted and how, as well as how best to engage with them. This process will also involve conducting focus/working groups to gather views emerging themes that may shape our consultation.
- The commitment to openness is also shown through:
 - ◊ completion of impact assessments for all key decisions
 - ◊ the Complaints and Compliments Procedure, which includes the ability to escalate significant matters
 - ◊ the Public Engagement and Consultation Strategy (presented to the July 2018 meeting of the Executive Panel)
 - ◊ engagement with Employee Representative Bodies
 - ◊ membership of the North Wales Equality Leads Forum and The Race Council Cymru
 - ◊ Engagement with Arfon Access Group and the North Wales Women's Centre
- A variety of engagement methods are used including:
 - ◊ directed communication using social media, with accounts on Facebook and Twitter. This includes both corporate accounts as well as social media accounts run by fire station staff to widen engagement in local communities
 - ◊ Ability to sign up for email updates on specific issues via the website
 - ◊ engagement with young people via the Phoenix programme, Fire cadets and school visits
 - ◊ community safety engagement with householders and businesses
 - ◊ Positive Action group, chaired by ED&I officer, to plan and direct events for all firefighter recruitment
 - ◊ attendance at open days/events – for example organised events like the Eisteddfod as well as fire station events organised by staff
 - ◊ internal communications include the Weekly Brief electronic newsletter to staff
 - ◊ External communications campaigns, led by the Community Safety Managers.
- Partnership arrangements are in place to deliver certain outcomes. For example, Principal Officers attend the four (revised to three during 22/23) local Public Services Boards and the Regional Partnership Board.
- Collaboration with other Emergency Services partners.
- A bi-annual commitment to engage with staff via the 'Fire Family' survey.

Defining outcomes in terms of sustainable economic, social and environmental benefits

- The Improvement and Well-being Plan sets the strategic direction for the Authority and details the improvement objectives in accordance with the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2009, and well-being objectives in accordance with the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015.
- The Service has four core values – People, Diversity and Inclusivity, Striving For Excellence and Service to the Community. These summarise the principles and personal values that staff are encouraged to adopt and demonstrate. [Core values](#)
- The Service has gained White Ribbon accreditation which demonstrates a commitment to stop violence against women.
- The Service has a statutory duty to put in place business continuity arrangements. Plans across the Service have been updated. There is ongoing collaboration with the other fire and rescue services in Wales to improve planning and consider current risks. The National Issues Committee includes a business continuity work stream.
- The Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) and annual budget process aims to ensure that financial resources are directed to the Authority's priorities.
- Partnership working is undertaken where there are shared objectives and advantages from working together – for example, the Strategic Arson Reduction Board and Public Services Boards.
- The Strategic Risk Management Policy sets out the process used to identify and control exposure to uncertainty, which may impact on the achievement of the objectives or activities. This is reviewed throughout the year to ensure that risks are identified and appropriately assessed.
- The Corporate Risk Register records these risks, and they are regularly monitored, by the Corporate Planning Department and reported to the Executive Panel.
- Key decisions are subject to an integrated impact assessment, which takes account of equality; data protection; health, safety and wellbeing; Welsh language; finance; sustainability and staffing; Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and the socio-economic duty that came into force on 1 April 2021.
- Safeguarding policy and procedure are in place to refer vulnerable people the Service come into contact with, to other agencies.
- The Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Steering Committee provides strategic oversight and governance.



Determining the interventions necessary to optimise the achievement of the intended outcomes

- Public consultation is carried out as part of setting the Authority's objectives which are set out in the Improvement and Well-being Plan. This outlines how the Authority intends to work together with other public bodies to tackle the complex issues that affect people's lives. An assessment of the Authority's performance is published in October each year.
- The Authority's Strategic Risk Management Policy sets out the process used to identify and control exposure to uncertainty, which may impact on the achievement of the objectives or activities. This is reviewed throughout the year to ensure that risks are appropriately managed.
- Following scrutiny from the Executive Group, performance and financial reports are presented to the Authority and its committees.
- Monitoring of availability, incidents, the workforce and budgets, through the governance structure, ensures that issues are identified and appropriate interventions agreed.
- National Operational Guidance and Joint Operational Learning available, which the Organisational Learning Committee provides strategic oversight and governance and implements any changes.
- There is a significant amount of partnership working across Wales to respond to issues facing the fire sector and other more general public sector issues. Collaboration with multiple agencies is an important aspect of the Authority's work including prevention and protection, responding to incidents and use of resources. The Service is an effective member of the All Wales Joint Emergency Service Group, for which the CFO is the Deputy Chair. Supporting our response to the national report by Audit Wales published in January 2022 on Joint Working Between Emergency Services. <https://www.audit.wales/publication/joint-working-between-emergency-services>.
- The budget planning processes ensure budgets are prepared in accordance with objectives, strategies and the Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS). This involves input from both Service leads and Authority Members. It shows how the resources will be deployed over the next few years to deliver agreed outcomes and agreed priorities. The Budget, Monitoring and Procurement Committee provides strategic oversight and governance.
- Audit Wales's review of corporate resilience (April 2021) found that the Authority had demonstrated its short-term resilience, https://www.audit.wales/sites/default/files/publications/north_wales_fra_corporate_resilience_english.pdf. In relation to Governance, it found that the Authority had an appropriate governance framework but that Members needed to play a more central role in addressing the big risks facing the Service. During 22/23 the membership of the FRA changed significantly, in response, a new Member induction was developed. This included orientation of our Statutory Duties and services delivered across NWFRS, emphasising the roles and responsibilities of Authority Members. These inductions were repeated as the Authority membership changed through the year. The scrutiny of budgets and risks facing the service are evidenced through the establishment of FRA Member working groups to give direction in the development of the Emergency Cover Review, Environmental Strategy 2023-2030 and New Training Centre project.

Developing the entity's capacity, including the capability of its leadership and the individuals within it

The Authority's Constitution outlines the roles of elected members and designated officers to enable shared understanding of roles and objectives. The designated posts include the Chief Fire Officer, Treasurer and Monitoring Officer.

- Collaborative and partnership working is in place regionally and nationally. For example, the three fire and rescue services in Wales are part of the all Wales Fire Investigation Training Forum. This supports shared learning and promotes a consistent approach across Wales.
- The All Wales People and Organisational Development Strategy 2021-2024 underpins the commitment to lifelong learning and workplace competence.
- Induction processes are in place for Members and employees. These include an introduction to the organisation's core values, the standards of conduct and the role requirements.
- The development needs of employees are identified through one to one, supervision and appraisal meetings. The Service is now a founding member of the pilot NFCC Direct Entry Scheme. The scheme will enable those with proven leadership skills, from a variety of sectors, to apply for Station Manager roles without needing to have fire service experience or without needing to have taken the traditional firefighter promotional route.
- The health and wellbeing of the workforce is key to the organisation and support is provided to maintain physical and mental wellbeing. This is achieved through a range of measures including HR policies and guidance documents, flexible working approach, the occupational health service and the employee assistance programme. To which the Health, Safety & Wellbeing Committee provides strategic oversight and governance.
- The Service has a dedicated training department, with competency frameworks for operational staff. Training is delivered using a variety of methods including e-learning modules which are mandatory for certain subjects e.g. Data Protection. To which the Organisational Learning Committee provides strategic oversight and governance.
- Arrangements are in place for internal reviews of compliance with Service standards and health and safety requirements.
- Staff are members of relevant professional bodies and undertake the required continual professional development.
- The Service aligns its promotional processes to the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) leadership frame work
- The Service has undertaken a detailed assessment of its operational training and implemented an ambitious new Operational Training Delivery Plan 2023/24.

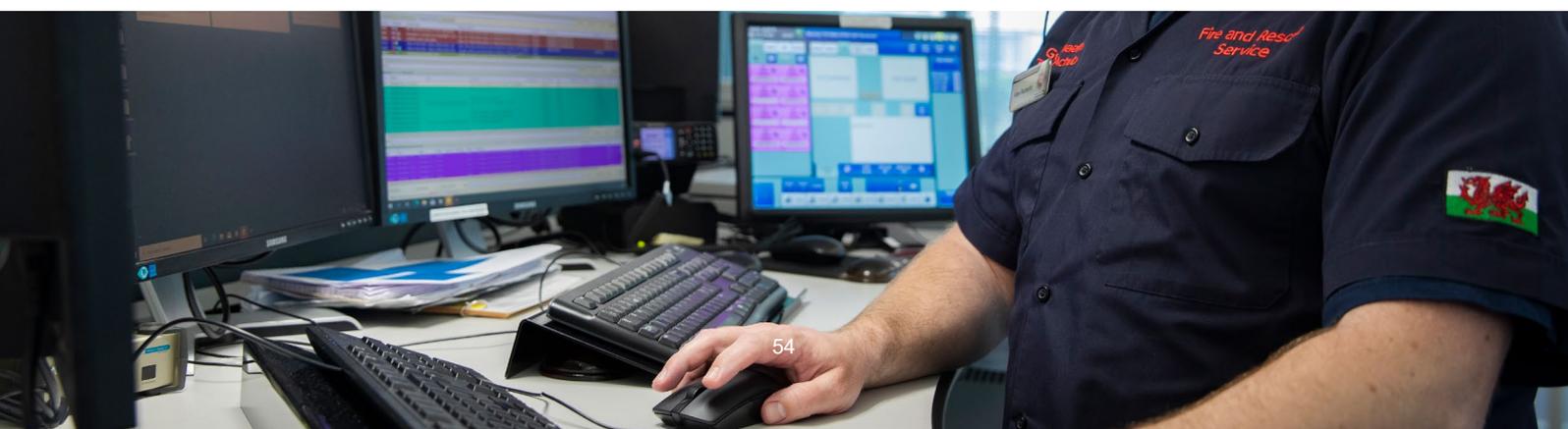
Managing risks and performance through robust internal control and strong public financial management

- The Treasurer is responsible for the proper administration of the Authority's financial affairs as required by S151 Local Government Finance Act 1992.
- The Monitoring Officer ensures compliance with established policies, procedures, laws and regulations.
- The Strategic Risk Management Policy details the process for the identification and control of risks. A corporate risk register is maintained by the Corporate Planning Department and is monitored throughout the year.
- Reports to the Authority and its committees include an integrated impact assessment to inform and support decisions.
- Business continuity arrangements are in place to ensure that critical services can continue to be delivered at all times.
- Management arrangements ensure that recommendations for improvement made by the Internal Auditor are agreed and monitored.
- Members and senior management are provided with regular reports on Service improvement and performance against key performance indicators and milestones.
- The Authority has arrangements to maintain registers of Members' personal and business interests and a register of gifts and hospitality.
- Policies for Anti-Fraud and Corruption and Whistle-blowing are in place which confirms the Authority's commitment to operating in a fair and transparent manner.
- Policies and arrangements are in place to manage the handling of data. These are the Data Protection Policy, Freedom of Information Policy, Data Retention Policy and Communications and Information Security Policy. These policies are supplemented with training and the e-learning module on data protection is mandatory for all staff.
- Information sharing protocols have been developed and agreed with partners.
- Financial management supports the delivery of services and transformational change as well as securing good stewardship. A financial update is presented at each Authority meeting, with reports available to the public on the website.
- The Treasury Management arrangements follow professional practices and are reviewed annually by members.
- The Authority's Statements of Accounts and its performance against key areas of risk and priority are subject to scrutiny by external audit.



Implementing good practices in transparency, reporting and audit to deliver effective accountability

- The Authority, with assistance from the Monitoring Officer, oversees and reviews the adequacy and effectiveness of the governance arrangements and internal control environment.
- Agendas and minutes of meetings are publicly available on the internet along with webcasts of the Authority meetings (when available).
- Authority reports follow a structured format which ensures that key information is presented in a clear and consistent manner to aid decision making.
- The Authority has a publication scheme and complies with the requirements of the Information Commissioner in relation to Freedom of Information requests which ensures the public have access to information held.
- The Improvement and Well-being Plan documents the objectives of the Authority.
- The Annual Statement of Accounts are produced in a user-friendly format. This provides clear information on income and expenditure and demonstrates the stewardship of public money for the year. The accounts are submitted for audit by the statutory deadline.
- The Annual Pay Policy Statement is approved and published in accordance with the Localism Act 2011. Members' salaries are paid in accordance with the Independent Remuneration Panel decisions and reported on the internet.
- Members and senior officers declare relevant interests in accordance with the Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the UK. These declarations enable the Authority to identify and report any related party transactions.
- The Annual Governance Statement provides transparency on the governance arrangements and the planned improvements for the coming year.
- The Auditor General is the external auditor appointed by statute and provides an opinion on the Statement of Accounts, which is published on the Authority's website. The Authority acts on recommendations and, where necessary, takes corrective action.
- The Internal Audit arrangements include a risk-based approach, which provides assurance that key risks are being managed. The Authority acts on recommendations and where necessary, takes corrective action.
- Processes are in place to ensure that recommendations from inspection and regulatory bodies are actioned.
- The Audit Wales review of corporate resilience referenced on page 9 will be considered as part of the annual planning cycling to ensure that opportunities for improvement are fully considered.



How has the Authority Addressed the Governance Improvement Actions from 2022/23

The Annual Governance and Improvement Assessment 2022/23 contained the following improvement actions. Here is how they have been addressed:

Improvement Area	Planned Action	Responsibility	Progress as at June 2023
Cyber Security	Action through the ICT Department to prepare for achieving Cyber Essentials Plus certification to help protect against cyber security threats to the organisation.	Head of ICT, Control and Central Area Head of ICT	The service has introduced the Intermediate step of achieving Cyber Essentials with the intention of moving on to CE+ in the next year. Significant progress has been made on this journey with the final prerequisite technology having been introduced in a testing stage at the end of the reporting period. It is expected that Cyber Essentials will be achieved early in the 2023/24 period, with work then commencing to achieve CE+.
Service Restructure (introduced 1st April 2022)	Action through the Finance and Corporate Planning Departments to check and confirm that the integrated planning approach remains appropriate and effective.	Head of Finance Head of Corporate Planning	As part of the review of the internal governance arrangements and development of the assurance framework, the corporate planning and financial planning approaches has been reviewed and revised during 2022/23. This has improved alignment with the corporate objectives and enhanced awareness of interdependencies between departments and major projects.
	Action through the Service Leadership Team to trial the Service's recently developed Assurance Framework and Building Blocks; and revise if necessary.	DCFO	The assurance framework and building blocks were implemented in July 2022. Terms of Reference for all committee and groups have been approved and the framework is embedded. A new departmental planning framework has been implemented for 23/24 departmental plans, this prioritises the capturing of evidence against the Building Blocks, Corporate Plan objectives and the objectives of the Wellbeing and Future Generations act.
	Action through the Service Leadership Team to design an annual process that explicitly involves the SLT and Internal Audit in assessing the extent to which the principles contained in the Good Governance Framework are being applied.	ACO Head of Corporate Planning	Subject to the approval of a new internal audit provider, Mersey Internal Audit Agency (MIAA) by the Audit Committee in June 2023, this action is to be carried forward into the 2023/24 AGS action plan.

Improvement Area	Planned Action	Responsibility	Progress as at June 2023
Environmental Strategy	Action through the FRA's Planning Working Group to develop a new Environmental Strategy	Head of Operations and East Area Head of Sustainability Head of Corporate Planning	An Environmental Strategy working group has been established and is developing the Environmental Strategy 2023 – 2030. It is planned that the strategy will be approved in the July 2023 full Fire Authority meeting.
Internal Audit	Review the contract for the provision of Internal Audit services to ensure its continuing effectiveness in providing assurance with regard to governance arrangements and that recommendations are acted upon.	ACFO (Finance and Resources)	The appointment of Internal Audit Services is a delegated function of the Audit Committee. The current arrangements concluded on 31st March 2023 and the Audit Committee confirmed that the appointment should be via a competitive exercise using the public sector Crown Commercial Services Framework for Audit and Assurance Services. This exercise is due to conclude during June 2023 and the new internal auditors will be appointed for the period of three years covering the 2023/24 – 2025/26 financial years. The appointment will be approved by the Audit Committee at its meeting on the 19th of June 2023.
FRA Member Development	Working with the FRA, design a more structured programme of Member Development to support Members to be effective in fulfilling their leadership and governance roles on the Authority.	ACO Clerk to the FRA Head of Training and Development	The membership of the FRA saw significant change due to the local elections in 2022. The majority of the new FRA are new members and a significant number were new local authority councillors. A structure programme of Member Development Support was implemented in 2022. Incorporating an induction pack, Members handbook and the leadership and governance roles on the Authority. During 2022/23 there were a small number of changes to the membership of the Authority, these new Members all received individual inductions.
Constitution	Action for the Clerk to the FRA to incorporate into the Constitution arrangements for pre-election periods leading up to local government elections and interregnum periods between Authorities.	Clerk to the Fire and Rescue Authority.	This action is to be carried forward into the 2023/24 AGS action plan.

Governance Improvement Action Plan 2023/24

The actions planned for 2023/24 are summarised in the table below. Progress during the year will be reported to the Service Leadership Team through the forums shown.

Improvement Area	Planned Action	Forum	Responsibility	
Carbon Emissions Reduction	Respond to the recommendations found within Audit Wales Carbon Emissions Reduction – North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority Report March 2022	Land and Property Committee Environmental and Sustainability Group	ACFO Operations Environmental and Climate Change Manager	December 2023
False Fire Alarms Reduction	Respond to the recommendations found within Audit Wales False fire alarms reduction – North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority Report April 2023	Prevention and Protection Performance Committee	ACFO Prevention and Protection Head of Prevention and Protection	March 2024
Community Resilience and Self Resilience	Review the recommendations found within the 'Together we can' – Community resilience and self-resilience Audit Wales report for impacts and implications for NWFRS	SLT – Improvement Board	Head of Corporate Planning, Performance and transformation.	December 2023
Service Restructure (introduced 1st April 2022)	Action through the Service Leadership Team to design an annual process that explicitly involves the SLT and Internal Audit in assessing the extent to which the principles contained in the Good Governance Framework are being applied.	SLT – Improvement Board	ACFO (Finance and Resources) Head of Corporate Planning, Performance and Transformation	December 2023
Constitution	Action for the Clerk to the Authority to incorporate into the Constitution arrangements for pre-election periods leading up to local government elections and interregnum periods between Authorities.	NWFRA	Clerk to the Fire and Rescue Authority.	March 2024

Improvement Area	Planned Action	Forum	Responsibility	
Departmental Planning	Conduct a review of the departmental planning framework has been implemented for 23/24 departmental plans, this prioritises the capturing of evidence against the building Blocks, Corporate Plan objectives and the objectives of the Wellbeing and Future Generations act.	SLT – Performance board	Head of Corporate Planning, Performance and Transformation.	March 2024
Community Risk Management Assessment (CRMA) and Corporate Planning	Complete a new CRMA aligned to the NFCC Community Risk Management Programme, and the objectives of the Wellbeing and Future Generations act. Develop a new Four-year Corporate Plan 2024 -2028 for NWFRS. Aligned to the new CRMA.	SLT – Improvement board	Head of Corporate Planning, Performance and Transformation.	March 2024
Emergency Cover Review Consultation	Working towards alignment to 'Best Practice', from The Consultation Institute, in the quality assurance of any public consultation completed on proposal from the Emergency Cover Review.	SLT – Performance Board	Head of Corporate Communications Head of Corporate Planning, Performance and Transformation.	December 2023



Compliance with the Financial Management Code

The CIPFA Financial Management Code (CIPFA FM Code) is designed to support good practice in financial management and to assist the Authority in demonstrating their financial sustainability. The CIPFA FM Code therefore sets the standards of financial management for the Authority.

The Code is based on a series of principles supported by specific standards and statements of practice which are considered necessary to provide the strong foundation to:

- Financially manage the short, medium- and long-term finances of the Authority
- Manage financial resilience to meet foreseen demands on services
- Financially manage unexpected shocks in their financial circumstances.

Each Authority must demonstrate that the requirements of the Code are being satisfied.

As Section 151 Officer I have the Statutory Responsibility (supported by the Senior Leadership Team and Members of the Authority) for ensuring compliance with the CIPFA FM Code. I have carried out a full assessment of compliance with the CIPFA FM Code as part of the annual review of the Annual Governance Statement and I can confirm that in my opinion the Authority is compliant with the code in the majority of areas.

Areas of improvement, however, have been identified, many of which are already underway, including:

- The introduction of a new financials system in 2022/23 will require further development of the budget setting and monitoring processes to embed long term decision-making and consultation as core principles.
- Continue to develop the latest Medium-Term Financial Strategy and begin considerations early, on options for ensuring a sustainable budget, including exploring any opportunities for transformation of services.
- Develop a clear long-term capital strategy and plan, for up to 10 years.

Signed

(Treasurer) 2023

Governance Opinion and Conclusion

The Authority recognises that good governance provides the foundation for the delivery of good quality services that meet the needs of stakeholders and ensures that public money is well spent. This review confirms the governance systems and monitoring in place for 2022/23 and the steps taken to ensure that they are working effectively.

The Authority is satisfied that appropriate governance arrangements are in place and remains committed to enhancing these through the implementation of the action plan for 2023/24.

Signed

(Chair) 2023

Signed

(Chief Fire Officer) 2023



**Awdurdod Tân ac Achub Gogledd Cymru
North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority**



**Gwasanaeth Tân ac Achub
Fire and Rescue Service**

Report to	North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority
Date	17 July 2023
Lead Officer	Helen MacArthur, ACFO Finance and Resources
Contact Officer	Helen Howard, Head of Finance
Subject	Provisional Outturn 2022/23



PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1 To present the unaudited revenue and capital expenditure position for 2022/23, to present the unaudited balance sheet position as at 31 March 2023 and to confirm the timetable for the production of the annual statement of accounts.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 2 The net budget requirement for 2022/23 was approved by the North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority (the Authority) at its meeting of 20 December 2021. This confirmed a net requirement of £39.41m to be funded by the constituent local authorities following the use of earmarked reserves and provisions. The net outturn position is an overspend of £0.40m to be met from the general fund.
- 3 The Authority approved the 2022/23 capital budget of £2.91m on 20 December 2021. This increased to £3.3m following the roll-over of schemes from 2021/22 and grant funded projects. The draft outturn position is £3.4m.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4 Members are asked to:
 - (i) note the unaudited revenue and capital outturn position for the 2022/23 financial year, including the earmarked reserves, as detailed within the report;
 - (ii) note the unaudited 2022/23 balance sheet position; and
 - (iii) note the timescales for the production of the annual statement of accounts and the external audit thereof.

OBSERVATIONS FROM THE AUDIT COMMITTEE

- 5 This unaudited outturn position has been considered by Members of the Audit Committee at the meeting on 19 June 2023. Members noted the report.

BACKGROUND

- 6 The Accounts and Audit (Wales) Regulations 2014 require the Authority to prepare and publish a statement of accounts on an annual basis. The timescales prescribed within the regulations require a draft statement of accounts to be issued by the 31 May with an audit deadline of the 31 July each year.
- 7 In recent years, and due to the Covid constraints which have impacted on both the production and audit of the statement of accounts, the deadlines have been relaxed. This is permissible within the regulations (regulation 10.4).
- 8 More recently, Audit Wales confirmed that it would not be able to achieve the deadline of the 31 July 2023 for the audit of the draft statement of accounts and provided an alternative deadline of the 30 November 2023. This was discussed by the Authority at its meeting of 21 April 2023. Appropriate notices have been placed on the Authority's website to confirm this.
- 9 This approach is consistent with the advice of the Welsh Government following consultation with the Society of Welsh Treasurers. The Welsh Government expectation is that the draft statement of accounts for 2022/23 should be prepared no later than 31 July 2023.
- 10 The Statement of Accounts for 2022/23 are currently being progressed and the unaudited outturn position for both revenue and capital expenditure have been finalised.

INFORMATION

REVENUE BUDGET

- 11 The net budget for 2022/23 of £39.412m was approved at the Authority meeting on 20 December 2021. Following further planning work, the overall net budget requirement was confirmed at the Authority meeting on the 20 June 2022 and at this time it was also noted that expenditure deferred from 2021/22 would be met from earmarked reserves. In addition, the specific risk associated with pay awards was noted as the national pay awards were outstanding.
- 12 The year-end revenue position was an overspend of £0.04m.
- 13 The main expenditure headings and draft outturn positions net of provisions and reserve movements are set out below:

	Final Budget (£000)	Draft Outturn (£000)	Variance (£000)	Variance (%)
Employees	30,130	30,353	223	0.67%
Premises	2,901	2,992	91	3.1%
Transport	1,204	1,250	46	3.9%
Supplies and Services	5,080	4,956	-124	-2.4%
Third Party Payments	451	419	-32	-7.1%
Capital Finance & Charges	2,263	2,424	161	7.1%
Income	-2,617	-2,943	-326	12.4%
Draft outturn	39,412	39,452	40	0.1%

EMPLOYEE COSTS

- 14 Employee costs form a significant element of the budget and include pay, pension costs, cost of recruitment and training and employee services, such as physiotherapy and occupational health services.
- 15 Employee costs represent over 75% of net expenditure and in year costs of £30.3m represent a year on year increase of 12.6% (£26.9m for 2021/22). The year on year increase reflects recruitment completed in year with the appointment of 24 operational firefighter apprentices and a net increase of retained duty system personnel of 16. In addition, a number of essential posts were filled including the Environmental and Sustainability Manager and the Procurement and Contracts Manager. Recruitment to specialist roles in the current employment market remains challenging and work is ongoing to address known pressures.
- 16 The in-year increase in pay costs also reflects the settlement of the pay awards for staff conditioned on local government terms and conditions (green book and blue book) and firefighters (grey book). In common with the public sector these settlements were above the planning assumptions and have necessitated careful management. These costs have been partially mitigated through the use of short-term vacancies, reductions in variable pay and also through variances in non-pay budgets including additional unplanned income.

NON-PAY COSTS

- 17 The outturn position for premises is £3.0m which is an overspend of 3.1% and compares to expenditure of £2.6m in 2021/22. The in-year costs include a pressure of £0.2m associated with energy contracts following the renewal of the contract from October 2022. Although the full impact was reduced due to government support for the period to April 2023 this remains a significant challenge and has been built into future budgets.
- 18 The premises position was also improved through the receipt of £0.5m from national non-domestic rating appeals which enabled a contribution to be made towards the planned maintenance expenditure.
- 19 The year-end position for transport is £1.25m which is a year on year increase of 20%. These costs include an overspend against fuel costs of £0.15m which have been mitigated through an underspend against lease vehicles and insurance excesses. The programme of vehicle replacements through the provision of leased vehicles has been delayed due to supply chain difficulties.
- 20 The supplies and services expenditure of £4.9m was lower than forecast due to delays in the receipt of orders to the value of £0.3m for essential PPE. These orders have been delayed due to supply chain issues in relation to the availability of the materials used. This matter is being addressed with the supplier to ensure that orders are prioritised. These goods were subsequently received in May.
- 21 The expenditure with third parties is £0.4m and includes the provision of services from other public sector bodies including facilities and estates management, internal audit services, legal services and pension fund administration. The in-year underspend reflects the repatriation of the financial services from Conwy CBC.

INCOME

- 22 As well as the constituent authority levy, the budget also includes expected income for fees and charges and grants.
- 23 The financial challenges experienced during 2022/23 have been mitigated through income being higher than budget. This has been achieved through the receipt of support for trainee firefighters from the apprenticeship levy, higher than expected interest receipts for cash deposits and income from the sale of assets.

Revenue Grant Funding

- 24 2022/23 grant funding allocations totals £2.38m (2021/22: £2.397m). A breakdown of grant funding, for 2022/23, is detailed below. All grants are carefully monitored throughout the financial year to identify any variances and to enable remedial action to be taken.

	Allocation £000
Arson Reduction	179
Home Safety Equipment	226
Youth & Young People Engagement	147
All Wales National Resilience	314
Firefighters Pension Contributions	1,081
Firelink Service Fees	416
Ask & Act	10
Cyber Essentials	10
Carbon Net Heat Development	2
Total Grant Funding	2,385

USE OF EARMARKED RESERVES

- 25 The aim of the authority's financial reserves is to provide funding for investment in future activities and to act as a safety net in case of short-term financial challenges arising from activity demands or unforeseen pressures.
- 26 The provisional outturn assumes that earmarked reserves will increase by £0.65m with a closing position of £6.2m. The Authority also holds a general reserve of £1.48m. The earmarked reserves have been established for anticipated expenditure which has either not proceeded in year or is planned for future years. They also provide capacity for the Authority to smooth the impact of one-off costs such as system upgrades as well as mitigate exceptional inflationary pressures.

	Balance 31 March 2021	Balance 31 March 2022	Transfers in/(out) 2022/23	Balance 31 March 2023
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Service Reserves				
Pension Reserve	85	85	460	545
Capital Financing Reserve	100	300	0	300
Fire Hydrant Repairs	90	90	0	90
PPE Uniform / Stock	250	250	0	250
Transformational Change	800	851	0	851
Facilities Improvement	490	1,323	-672	651
Legal Liability	200	225	-39	186
Training	100	250	0	250
Major Incidents	150	150	0	150
System Improvements	501	847	-137	710
Inflation	0	250	0	250
Capital & Grant Reserves				
HFSC Grant Reduction	195	195	0	195
Radio Scheme	500	750	0	750
Capital Building Projects	0	0	1043	1043
Total	3,461	5,566	655	6,221

CAPITAL PROGRAMME

- 27 The Authority has approved a capital programme of £3.321m including schemes rolled over from 2021/22 and additional expenditure funded by grant.
- 28 Ongoing supply chain issues and inflationary pressures remain and it has been necessary to review and revise the capital programme to reflect projects which can be delivered in year.
- 29 A particular area of challenge relates to the provision of replacement training towers. Whilst the tenders have been awarded there have been delays due to supplier capacity and planning permission and inflationary pressures due to the cost of steel. A total of three replacement towers were scheduled for completion during 2022/23 and these have now been deferred into 2023/24.
- 30 The minor works programme has continued in year with expenditure of £0.69m. This includes work to upgrade the washing facilities at Dolgellau, female changing facilities in Rhyl, roof replacement at Caernarfon station and replacement appliance bay doors in Chirk.

31 The outturn for the capital programme is £3.366m.

Scheme	Revised Plan	Forecast	Proposed Rollover
	£'000	£'000	£'000
Fire Appliance Replacement	1,248	1,263	
Multi-Purpose Station Vans	160	-	160
National Resilience vehicles and equipment	0	132	
Electric vehicle charging points	0	120	
Workshop Equipment	20	12	
Training Tower Replacement	160	-	307
Buildings - Minor Works	391	696	158
Control server	167	125	
Operational Equipment	92	93	
Fire Appliances (b/f from 2021/22)	923	925	
Training Towers (b/f from 2021/22)	160	-	
Total Capital Plan	3,321	3,366	625

32 The Authority has a replacement programme for fire appliances which is currently 15 years. During 2022/23 a total of 13 have been brought into operational use out of a total of 54 front-line water tenders.

33 The financing of the capital plan is as follows:

Funding	Amount
	£'000
Borrowing	2,351
Grant Funding	490
Internal Resources	525
Total	3,366

CAPITAL FINANCING AND CHARGES

34 The capital financing budget sets aside revenue funding to finance capital expenditure and is made up of interest charges and a minimum revenue provision (MRP) for the use of assets.

35 The Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) represents the minimum amount that must be charged to an authority's revenue account each year for financing of capital expenditure, which will have initially been funded by borrowing. It is part of all Authority's accounting practices and is about making sure that the Authority can pay off the debts it has from buying capital assets, such as buildings and vehicles.

- 36 Regulations require the Authority to determine each financial year an amount of MRP, which it considers to be prudent by reference to a calculated capital financing requirement (CFR). The MRP charge for 2022/23 was £1.96m.
- 37 The actual expenditure was £2.424m which is an overspend of £161k. This has arisen due to the significant interest increases experienced during the financial year. The overall impact of this has been carefully managed through the use of internal sources of funding and through following the advice from our professional advisors to secure beneficial market rates.

BORROWING

- 38 Capital expenditure is largely funded via external borrowing. Although the capital expenditure is largely funded via loans in the short term the Authority utilises surplus revenue cash.
- 39 The Authority's borrowings were £26.46m at 31 March 2023. This includes £6.0m of temporary short-term loans, from other public sector bodies and £20.46m of loans from the Public Works Loans Board. All loans are agreed on fixed rates of interest and following advice from the Authority's professional advisors, Arlingclose. The Treasury Management activity and out-turn position is reported separately.

BALANCE SHEET

- 40 The Balance Sheet provides further information on the Authority's long-term financial position and includes both assets and liabilities.

FIXED ASSETS AND BORROWING

- 41 Fixed assets relate to items with a cost in excess of £10,000 which are expected to be used over a period exceeding 12 months. The Authority's fixed assets include land and buildings, vehicles, operational equipment and ICT equipment and software costs. The estimated value as at 31st March 2023 is £57.06m (2021/22: £39.97m).
- 42 Land and buildings were revalued at 31 March 2023. This resulted in an increase in value of £12.42m. The Authority's land and buildings account for 82% of total assets with a net book value of £47.2m as at 31st March 2023.
- 43 The Authority is permitted to enter into borrowing arrangements to fund the purchase of fixed assets. At as 31 March 2022 the value of borrowing was £26.46m (2021/22: £24.43m). Further information is contained within paragraph 39 of this report.

- 44 The capital financing costs within the revenue position include £0.465m relating to interest payments on borrowing (2021/22: £0.350m).

CURRENT ASSETS AND CURRENT LIABILITIES

- 45 The Authority must maintain adequate resources to ensure that it is able to meet its obligations. This is achieved through the management of cash alongside debtor and creditor balances. As at the balance sheet date the Authority recorded a balance of £9.22m (2021/22: £6.34m) relating to cash and debtors. This is offset by £4.48m (2021/22: £3.04m) relating to amounts owed by the Authority to creditors.
- 46 The cash level was high due to maintaining enough cash to repay a short-term loan and capital payments due in April 2023.

PENSION LIABILITIES

- 47 The Authority is required to account for the estimated liabilities relating to its pension schemes. The Authority has two schemes; the Firefighters' Pension Scheme and the Local Government Pension Scheme. The value of future liabilities is calculated by the actuary for each scheme and estimated to be £227.14m as at 31 March 2023 (2021/22: £327.5m). This valuation includes the actuarial assessment of the costs of national legal challenges including the McCloud judgment relating to age discrimination in public sector pension schemes and the O'Brien judgment relating to discrimination of part time workers

IMPLICATIONS

Well-being Objectives	This report links to the Authority'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 in to the future.
Budget	Budget is set annually in accordance with the proposed service delivery which includes emergency response and prevention work.
Legal	It is a legal requirement that the Authority produces the Statement of Accounts in accordance with the prescribed standards.
Staffing	The management of staffing costs is critical to achieving financial sustainability and effective service delivery.
Equalities/Human Rights/Welsh Language	No specific issues of note within this report.
Risks	Income and expenditure are closely monitored to ensure that deviations from the approved budget are properly identified and reported to Members.

Report to	North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority
Date	17 July 2023
Lead Officer	Helen MacArthur, Assistant Chief Fire Officer (Finance and Resources)
Subject	Firefighters Pension Schemes Local Pension Board – Annual Report 2022/23



PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1 To present to Members of the North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority (the Authority) the annual report of the Local Pension Board (LPB) which details the work of the board during the 2022/23 financial year. The annual report is attached at appendix 1.
- 2 To seek approval from Members to increase the membership of the Local Pension Board. These proposed changes are set out in the updated Terms of Reference attached at appendix 2.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 3 The annual report of the Local Pension Board details the work undertaken by the board during 2022/23 and provides a work programme for 2023/24.
- 4 The Local Pension Board is required to have an equal balance of employee and employer membership. The current membership is a total of eight members but due to availability one meeting has been cancelled during the financial year and one deferred. It is proposed to increase the membership to ten members to ensure that the Local Pension Board is able to meet on four occasions each year.

OBSERVATIONS FROM THE LOCAL PENSION BOARD

- 5 The Local Pension Board Annual Report 2022/23 was considered by the Local Pension Board at its meeting of 28 April 2023. The report was endorsed subject to a minor amendment to provide members with a financial update following the audit of the Pension Fund Accounts.
- 6 The members of the Local Pension Board also acknowledged the difficulties being experienced due to availability of members and recommended that the membership be increased to ten members.

RECOMMENDATION

- 7 It is recommended that Members:
- i) approve the Local Pension Board 2022/23 Annual Report;
 - ii) note the inclusion of a further item on the forward work programme, to include an update on the financial aspects of the pension fund including the ongoing valuation;
 - iii) approve the increase in membership of the Local Pension Board from eight to ten members; and
 - iv) seek nominations for a further employer representation from Members of the Authority.

BACKGROUND

- 8 This document sets out the work undertaken by the Local Pension Board of North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority (the Authority). The Authority is the Scheme Manager as defined under Section 4 of the Public Service Pensions Act 2013. The Local Pension Board is established in accordance with Section 5 of that Act.
- 9 The governance requirements around pensions were introduced as a result of the Public Service Pensions Act 2013. The Act provides for clearer governance arrangements with specific defined roles, the publication of more information on a consistent basis, and administration practices in line with those in the private sector.
- 10 The Firefighters' Pension Scheme (Amendment) (Governance) Regulations 2015 relating to the creation and ongoing operation of local pensions came into force on 1 April 2015. These regulations require the Authority to establish a Local Pension Board in respect of the Firefighter's Pension Scheme by 1 April 2015.
- 11 The role and remit of the Local Pension Board is to assist the Authority in its capacity as Scheme Manager by making sure it is administering the Firefighters' Pension Scheme effectively and efficiently and is complying with relevant laws and regulations. In order to aid transparency, the Scheme Manager is required to publish the annual report of its Local Pension Board.

- 12 As set in the terms of reference for the Local Pension Board, the annual report should include:
- a summary of the work of the Local Pension Board and a work plan for the coming year;
 - details of areas of concern reported to or raised by the Board and recommendations made;
 - details of any conflicts of interest that have arisen in respect of individual Local Pension Board members and how these have been managed;
 - any areas of risk or concern the Board wish to raise with the Scheme Manager;
 - details of training received and identified training needs; and
 - details of any expenses and costs incurred by the Local Pension Board and any anticipated expenses for the forthcoming year.

INFORMATION

- 13 The Local Pension Board 2022/23 Annual Report is set out in Appendix 1. The report was considered by members of the Local Pension Board at its meeting of the 28 April 2023. Members endorsed the report and requested one further amendment to include a financial update following the audit of the Pension Fund Account. The financial update will also provide information on the results on the ongoing valuation of the Firefighters' Pension Scheme which are expected to significantly increase the pension fund liabilities.
- 14 Members of the Local Pension Board further noted that it had been necessary to cancel one meeting during the course of the year and defer the final one until 28 April 2023. This was attributed to the availability of members and it was proposed that the membership should be increased from eight to ten members to reduce the risk of this recurring. These proposals have been incorporated into the Terms of Reference within Appendix 2.
- 15 The additional members would include one Fire and Rescue Authority Member to fulfil the role of employer representative and one employee representative.

IMPLICATIONS

Wellbeing Objectives	Considered not relevant
Budget	Cost of the Local Pension Board is funded from existing Members' Services budget
Legal	The new governance requirements around pensions were introduced as a result of the Public Service Pensions Act 2013. FPS (Amendment) Governance regulations 2015.
Staffing	Considered not relevant
Equalities/Human Rights/ Welsh Language	It is not considered that there are any issues that need addressing as the recommendations apply equally to all Members regardless of protected characteristics under the Single Equality Act.
Risks	All FRAs need to comply with the guidance provided by the Pensions Regulator around the governance arrangements for Local Pension Boards.

**North Wales Fire and Rescue Service
Firefighters' Pension Scheme**

**Local Pension Board
Annual Report
2022-23**

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1.0 Introduction

This is the Annual Report of the North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority Local Pension Board (the Board), covering the period from 1 April 2022 to 31 March 2023. This report includes commentary on the following:

- Details of any conflict of interest that have arisen in respect of Board members;
- Details of training received and identified training needs for Board members;
- A summary of the work undertaken by the Board during 2022/23;
- Areas of concern or risk reported to or raised by the Board; and
- The forward work programme for 2023/24.

2.0 Roles and Functions

In accordance with Section 5 and Section 30 (1) of the Public Services Pensions Act 2013 and Regulation 4A of the Firefighters' Pension Scheme (Amendment) (Governance) Regulations 2015, the North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority Local Pension Board (the Board) was established in April 2015. The role and remit of the Board is to assist the Scheme Manager (North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority) to secure compliance with:

- The relevant laws and regulations;
- Any other legislation relating to the governance and administration of the Scheme;
- The requirements imposed by the Regulator in relation to the Scheme; and
- To ensure the effective and efficient governance and administration of the Scheme.

The Board is expected to complement and enhance the Authority's existing arrangements for managing the firefighter pension schemes. It does not replace the existing arrangements and it is not a decision-making body. Rather, it is designed to act as a critical friend to the Authority and its officers when they act in the capacity of scheme manager.

3.0 Membership and meetings of the Board

During the reporting period, the Board comprised of eight members as follows:

- Four employer representatives comprising of two members of North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority, the Clerk to the Authority (or nominated deputy) and Treasurer of the Authority.
- Four employee representatives – all of whom are from each representative body officially associated with North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority (the Authority).

In addition to Local Pension Board Members, the following key officers support the Board and attend Board meetings:

- Assistant Chief Fire Officer (Finance and Resources); and
- Pensions Manager

The members of the Local Pension Board were all formally elected at the meeting of 21 July 2023. This is necessary to comply with the Terms of Reference where the term of appointment for all members aligns with council elections.

Chair of the Board

The Chairperson of the Board is rotated every two years between a member representing employers and those representing scheme members.

ACFO Richard Fairhead was elected as Chair for the period 2022-2024. The Chair is also nominated to sit on the National Firefighters' Pension Scheme Advisory Board.

The Board was scheduled to meet on four occasions during the 2022/23 financial year but due to apologies, the meeting scheduled for 27 October 2022 was cancelled and the meeting of 28 March 2023 was postponed until April 2023. This will be addressed for the 2023/24 financial year to ensure that meetings take place as planned with the requisite number of members.

4.0 Conflicts of Interest Policy

The Public Service Pensions Act 2013 requires that a member of a pension board does not have a conflict of interest. A conflict of interest is defined as a financial or other interest which is likely to prejudice a person's exercise of functions as a member of a pension board. The Act is clear that actual membership of one of the Firefighter Pension Schemes is not in itself a conflict of interest, so would not preclude a scheme member from serving on the Board.

The Board has a policy for the management of potential conflicts in order to ensure that they do not become actual conflicts, and all members of the Board are familiar with the policy. In addition, conflicts of interest is a standing item on all Board agendas and any interests noted by members are recorded so that appropriate action can be taken to manage the conflict.

There have been no declarations made by any member, advisor or attendee during the relevant period.

A copy of the Conflict of Interest policy can be found here:

[Conflict of Interest Policy](#)

No conflicts of interest were declared during the 2022/23 financial year.

5.0 Knowledge and Understanding

It is a statutory requirement of the Public Service Pensions Act 2013 that members of the Local Pension Board should have the capacity to become conversant with, and develop a knowledge of, detailed pension related issues to effectively carry out their duties.

Each individual appointed to the Board must have knowledge and understanding of the law relating to pensions and such other matters as may be prescribed in other legislation.

A Board member should have an understanding of what is relevant to their role and be able to identify and challenge a failure to comply with:

- The Firefighter Pension Scheme regulations;
- Other legislation relating to the governance and administration of the schemes;
- Requirements imposed by the Pensions Regulator; or
- The standards and expectations set out in any relevant code of practice issued by the Pensions Regulator.

Upon appointment, members are required to complete the online training modules available on the Pensions Regulator's website. In addition, the Authority provides both induction training to new Board members and ongoing training sessions during Board meetings for all members to assist them in undertaking their role.

The Scheme Manager keeps appropriate records of the learning activities of individual members and the Board as a whole. This assists the Authority and members in demonstrating compliance, if necessary, with the legal requirement and records how risks associated with knowledge gaps have been mitigated.

Annually, members complete a knowledge and training needs analysis self-assessment form, which is used to prepare a forward training programme. The training of Board members is largely carried out in house at no direct cost; the national events such as the LGA conference have, so far, been free of charge.

A schedule detailing the training undertaken by Board members during 2022/23 is detailed below:

Date	Topics Covered
22 July 2022	Induction training covering the Legal Framework and the Firefighters' Pension Scheme(s); the financial aspects; scheme regulation; addressing concerns including the internal dispute resolution procedure (IDRP)
12 December 2022	Knowledge, understanding and obligations of LPB members; an overview of The Pensions Regulator's (TPR's) Toolkit; the Code of Practice 14; and local scheme orientation.
28 April 2023	Valuation of the pension scheme

6.0 Work Programme 2022/23

The Board was scheduled to meet on four occasions during the year - 22 July 2022, 27 October 2022, 12 December 2022 and 28 March 2023 (deferred until 28 April 2023). The meeting scheduled for 27 October was cancelled due to the number of apologies. The work undertaken by the Board during the course of the year has been defined by the Terms of Reference. The Board approves and reviews the Terms of Reference on an annual basis and the most recent version was approved at the meeting of 22 July 2022. The Terms of Reference can be found via the following link:

[LPB Terms of Reference 2022-23](#)

During the period 1 April 2022 to 31 March 2023 the following specific matters were considered by the Board:

- Review and approval of the Terms of Reference
- Consideration of the national legal challenge relating to the transitional pension scheme arrangements (McCloud Judgment)
- Consideration of the legal matter relating to the pension arrangements for on call firefighters (O'Brien Judgment)
- Knowledge and training needs analysis update
- Updates on Pension Ombudsman cases
- A review of the risk register

Each agenda also includes the following standing items:

- Declaration of Interest
- Minutes of last meeting
- Firefighters' Pension Schemes Update Report which focuses on membership and internal complaints and cases referred to the Pensions Ombudsman
- Administrators Update Report (Dyfed Pension Fund) confirming compliance with Welsh Government circulars and data quality
- An update on legal matters affecting the scheme
- Scheme Advisory Board Update
- Training for members of the LPB
- Risk Register
- Matters for escalation to full FRA

Since the Local Firefighter Pension Board was set up in 2015, the work of the Board has been shaped by the Board members and by officers supporting the Board. Some regular reports have been developed and these are:

- The Firefighters' Pension Schemes Update Report

Provides the Board with the latest information on areas of significant pension work, and includes both local and national issues. As well as enhancing the knowledge and understanding of Board members, this regular report serves to prompt discussion at the Board about the impact of issues on Pension Scheme members and about how workloads are being managed. This helps to achieve the Board's purpose of securing effective governance and administration;

- The Dyfed Pension Fund Update Report

produced by the administrators and provides assurance that the scheme is being properly administered. As well as providing regulatory updates, the report focuses on specific workload issues, such as the Guaranteed Minimum Pension reconciliation, data quality, appeals, breaches and activity levels on the 'My Pensions Online' tool; and

- The Risk Register

Specific areas of the Risk Register are reviewed regularly by the Scheme Manager and is presented to the Board at each meeting, with any amendments highlighted. This allows the Board to keep track of the key risks and the control measures designed to manage those risks.

More detail is available in the agendas and minutes of the above Board meetings which can be accessed via following link: [Local Pension Board](#)

8.0 Work Programme 2023/24

The Firefighters' Pension Scheme Board maintains a work programme which is considered at every meeting. Now that the Board has completed a number of training activities, it will begin to select topics for in-depth analysis with a view to making recommendations to the Fire and Rescue Authority as and when necessary.

The Work Programme for 2023/24 is as set out within Appendix 1.

Local Pension Board Forward Work Plan 2023/24

Agenda item	28 April 2023	11 July 2023	24 October 2023	23 January 2024
Review of membership and confirmation of meeting dates	x			
Service update report	X	X	X	X
Administrator's update report	X	X	X	X
Legal challenges and regulatory matters	X	X	X	X
Scheme Advisory Board Wales	X	X	X	X
Risk Register	X	X	X	X
Member Induction	X			
Training needs analysis	X			
Training update	X	X	X	X
The Pensions Regulator – aspects of good governance		X	X	X
Annual Report	X			
Review of Terms of Reference		X		
Financial update – including valuation outcome			X	
Items of significance to be escalated to Fire and Rescue Authority	X	X	X	X

Terms of Reference for the Local Pension Board of North Wales Fire and Rescue Service

1. This document sets out the terms of reference for the Local Pension Board of North Wales Fire and Rescue Service, Firefighters' Pension Scheme as required by the Public Service Pensions Act 2013 and the Local Government (Amendment) (Governance) Regulations 2015.

Scheme Management

2. North Wales Fire and Rescue, as administering authority, is the Scheme Manager. Its functions are discharged in accordance with the Authority's scheme of delegation by the Treasurer and Chief Fire Officer.

The Local Pension Board

3. The role of the Local Pension Board is to assist North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority (NWFRA), as the administering authority:
 - to secure compliance with the scheme regulations and other legislation relating to the governance and administration of the scheme;
 - to secure compliance with requirements imposed in relation to the scheme by the Pensions Regulator;
 - ensure the effective and efficient governance and administration of the Firefighters' Pension Schemes for Dyfed Pension Fund;
 - the role of the Board will be oversight of these matters and not decision making;
 - in undertaking any relevant work as requested;
 - in such other matters as the scheme regulations may specify.
4. The Local Pension Board will ensure that the Code of Practice on governance and administration issued by the Pensions Regulator is complied with. The Board will also ensure that it complies with the knowledge and understanding requirements in the Pensions Regulator's Code of Practice.
5. The Local Pension Board is accountable to the Pensions Regulator, the National Scheme Advisory Board and the Administering Authority in their role as Scheme Manager.
6. The principal functions of the Local Pension Board shall include, but not be limited to:
 - reviewing decision making processes, policies and procedures to ensure they are compliant with relevant Regulations;
 - seeking assurance that these are followed and adhered to with regard to Pensions decisions;
 -

- seeking assurance that administration performance is in compliance with the Authority's performance framework and that monitoring arrangements are adequate and robust;
 - considering the effectiveness of communication with employers and scheme members including a review of the Communication Strategy; considering and commenting on internal audit recommendations and external auditor reports.
7. Any complaint or allegation of a breach of the Regulations brought to the attention of the Local Pension Board shall be dealt with in accordance with the Code of Practice as published by the Pensions Regulator.

Frequency and Notice of Meetings

8. The Local Pension Board shall meet sufficiently regularly to discharge its duties and responsibilities effectively; four meetings will be scheduled during each financial year.
9. The Members' Liaison Officer shall give notice to all Local Pension Board members of each meeting of the Board, including the date, location and time of the meeting and shall ensure that a formal record of the Local Pension Board proceedings is maintained.
10. Papers will be provided three working days before each of the formal Local Pension Board meetings.
11. All agendas and non-confidential Local Pension Board papers and minutes of meetings will be published on NWFRA' website, together with the Board Terms of Reference and details of the Board membership.

Membership

12. The Local Pension Board shall consist of no fewer than ten members (in total), and must include an equal balance of employer and scheme member (employee) representatives. These shall be constituted as follows:

Constituency	Definition/Constraints
Employer	To represent NWFRA
Scheme Member (employee)	To represent all members of the scheme (active, deferred and pensioner)

13. The term of office for all members of the Board will fall in line with council elections. Members may at the end of their term, express a wish to be considered for re-election.

14. Local Pension Board members must meet key attendance and training requirements to retain their membership during this period. All members must:
 - endeavour to attend all meetings of the Board
 - comply with the training plan produced by the Pensions Manager
 - ensure compliance with the Pension Regulator's Code of Practice.
15. Each Employer Representative and Scheme Member Representative will have an individual voting right.
16. All members within the Firefighters' Pension Schemes must have an equal opportunity to be nominated for the role of member representative.
17. For the purpose of appointing employer representatives to the Board, nominations will be sought from all Fire and Rescue Authority members. The Treasurer and Monitoring Officer (or deputy) will also provide employer representation.
18. For the purpose of appointing scheme member (employee) representatives to the Board, nominations will be requested through the Departmental Representatives and Trade Union Forum with further nominations being sought via an advert placed on the Authority's website. Where more than three nominations are received candidates will be considered, shortlisted and interviewed by a representative of the Scheme Manager who will then make recommendations to the Chief Fire Officer to formally appoint.
19. If a Local Pension Board member acting as an employer representative leaves the employment of the employer they are representing they will no longer be eligible to sit on the Board.
20. In the event of consistent non-attendance of a Board member, or for failure to meet key attendance and training requirements as set out in (13) above, the tenure of that membership will be reviewed. In the case of a member representative, this will be done by a representative of the Scheme Manager who may make recommendation for the membership to be revoked if considered necessary. In such event, there will be a right of appeal to the Chief Fire Officer prior to any recommendation. In the case of an employer representative, any such decision will be considered by the chair of the Fire and Rescue Authority.
21. If an employer or scheme member representative wishes to resign they must write to the Chief Fire Officer, giving at least one month's notice.
22. The Chairperson of the Local Pension Board will be rotated on a bi-annual basis between a member representing employers and those representing scheme members.

23. It will be the role of a representative acting as Chairperson to:
- agree and set the agenda for a meeting of the Board
 - manage the meetings to ensure that the business of the meeting is completed in the agreed time
 - ensure that all members of the Board show due respect for process and that all views are fully heard and considered
 - strive as far as possible to achieve a consensus as an outcome
 - ensure that the actions and rationale for decisions taken are clear and properly recorded.
24. Due to the specialist nature of the work of the Board, personal attendance at all meetings is expected of all Board members with no provision for a substitute. However, deputies would be allowed, but they would be responsible for maintaining their own training to ensure they were *au fait* with pensions issues.
25. The Board may, with the approval of the Chief Fire Officer, co-opt persons who are not members to aid the Board for a period of time or for a specific task where this would provide additional skills, knowledge or experience. The co-opted members would not be permitted to vote.

Quorum

26. Four of the Board members must be present for a meeting to be quorate. If the Chairperson is absent at a meeting and there is a quorum then the attending members must choose a Chairperson to preside over that meeting.

Knowledge and Skills

27. A member of the Pension Board must be conversant with:
- the legislation and associated guidance of the four Firefighter Pension Schemes;
 - any policies, procedures or decision making processes about the administration of the Schemes adopted by NWFRA and Dyfed Pension Fund.
28. A member of the Local Pension Board must have knowledge and understanding of the law relating to pensions and any other matters which are prescribed in Regulations.
29. It is for individual Pension Board members to be satisfied that they have the appropriate degree of knowledge and understanding to enable them to properly exercise their functions as a member of the Pension Board.

30. Pension Board members are required to be able to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding and to refresh and keep their knowledge up to date. Pension Board members are therefore required to maintain a written record of relevant training and development.
31. Pension Board members must confirm to the Pensions Manager within six months of joining the Board that they have completed the Pension Regulator training.
32. During the first meeting of the financial year, Pension Board members must consider and agree an annual training programme.

Standards of Conduct and Conflicts of Interest

33. The role of the Local Pension Board members requires the highest standards of conduct and therefore the 'seven principles of public life' will be applied to all Local Pension Board members. Board members will be required to observe the members' code of conduct and data protection policies of NWFRA. The Board is required to always act within these terms of reference. In accordance with the Public Service Pension Act 2013 a board member must not have a financial or other interest that could prejudice them in carrying out their Board duties. This does not include a financial or other interest arising merely by virtue of membership of the FPS.
34. As such all members of the Local Pension Board will be required to declare any interests and any potential conflicts of interest in line with the requirements of the Public Service Pensions Act 2013 and the Pension Regulator's Code. These declarations are required as part of the appointment process, as well as at regular intervals throughout a member's tenure.

Reporting

35. The Board is expected to produce an annual report to the Fire and Rescue Authority which should include:
 - a summary of the work of the Local Pension Board and a work plan for the coming year
 - details of areas of concern reported to or raised by the Board and recommendations made
 - details of any conflicts of interest that have arisen in respect of individual Local Pension Board members and how these have been managed
 - any areas of risk or concern the Board wish to raise with the Scheme Manager
 - details of training received and identified training needs
 - details of any expenses and costs incurred by the Local Pension Board and any anticipated expenses for the forthcoming year.

- 36 Although the Board is only required to produce a single annual report, minutes for each meeting of the Board will be published on the Authority's website.
- 37 Should the Board have concerns believed to be sufficiently serious that they should be reported at a higher level than is standard (to the Pensions Manager) they should report to the Chief Fire Officer. This may include, but not be limited to, occasions where the Board feel that previous recommendations have not been acted upon. In extreme cases such as a fundamental breach of Regulations or a fundamental failure by the Administering Authority to ensure effective governance of the fund, the Board may consider reporting to the National Scheme Advisory Board and/or the Pensions Regulator.

Remuneration

- 38 Remuneration for members of the Local Pension Board will be limited to a refund of actual expenses incurred in attending Board meetings and training.
It is expected that employers of board members will provide appropriate capacity to allow the member to perform this role within their normal working day without any reduction to pay.
- 39 Expense claims should be submitted no later than 1 month following the incursion.

Publication of Local Pension Board Information

- 40 Up to date information will be posted on NWFRA' website showing:
- names and information of the Local Pension Board members
 - how the scheme members and employers are represented on the Local Pension Board
 - responsibilities of the Local Pension Board as a whole
 - full terms of reference and policies of the Local Pension Board and how they operate
 - Local Pension Board appointment process.

Review

- 41 These terms of reference were formally adopted by the Board at its first meeting on 20 April 2015 and are reviewed annually to or upon statutory or regulatory changes in line with paragraph 41.
- 42 The Chief Fire Officer is authorised to make minor amendments, consequential upon statutory or regulatory change, or to update arrangements consequential on other external factors.

Report to	North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority
Date	17 July 2023
Lead Officer	Stuart Millington, Assistant Chief Fire Officer (Environment)
Contact Officer	Tim Christensen, Environment and Climate Change Manager
Subject	Environmental Strategy 2023-2030



PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1 This report presents a proposed Environmental Strategy for consideration by the North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority (the Authority). Authority Members from each of the constituent local authorities have been convened in a Working Group to develop the Environmental Strategy and specific targets set out within.

RECOMMENDATION

- 2 Members are asked to approve the proposed Environmental Strategy for the period 2023-2030.

BACKGROUND

- 3 The proposed Environmental Strategy was presented to Members at a Working Group on 4 April 2023, and endorsed by the Executive Panel on 19 June 2023.
- 4 It affirms existing legislative and policy commitments under the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015, the Environment (Wales) Act 2016.
- 5 The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 requires public bodies to consider the long-term impacts of decisions in a number of ways. The relevant duties to the preparation of an environmental strategy for the Service fall under the heading 'A Resilient Wales':
 - 1) **Biodiversity and Soil** Maintain and enhance the natural environment through managing land appropriately to create healthy functioning ecosystems
 - 2) **Natural Green Space** Support social resilience and community well-being
 - 3) **Knowledge of Nature** Increase awareness of the importance of a biodiverse natural environment with healthy functioning ecosystems
 - 4) **Water and Air Quality** Support ecological resilience, making the environment healthier for wildlife and people

- 6 The Environment (Wales) Act 2016 sets out an ambition for the Welsh Government to reduce emissions of greenhouse gases in Wales to net zero by the year 2050.
- 7 In accordance with this duty, the Welsh Government has prepared a series of interim carbon budgets, including under Carbon Budget 3 (CB3) an ambition for the Welsh public sector to be net zero carbon by 2030. This is binding on the Welsh Government as a whole, and not specific public bodies.
- 8 The Service is a signatory to the Emergency Services Environment and Sustainability Group (EESG) Sustainability Charter, which sets out the following relevant commitments:
 - 1) Work towards net zero carbon emissions through improving the energy efficiency of our estate and sustainable business and personal travel.
 - 2) Improve resource efficiency and adopt circular economy approaches to reducing waste and save money.
 - 3) Restore and enhance local biodiversity through considered management of our estates.
 - 4) Adapt to inevitable climate change through proactively managing our ability to respond to extreme weather events and changes to service demand.
 - 5) Take action to avoid or mitigate pollution of water courses.
 - 6) Minimise our reliance on fossil fuels by actively seeking to generate renewable energy at our sites, and through the adoption of greener technologies and fuels for our fleet.

INFORMATION

- 9 Arguably the most pressing environmental issue facing the Service is the need to reduce our carbon emissions. To do this, we first need to quantify them, then take appropriate measures to minimise them in the most cost-effective way.
- 10 In accordance with internationally recognised standards, our carbon emissions are reported under three scopes:

Scope 1: Direct Emissions – These are our ‘exhaust pipe’ emissions where we emit greenhouse gases directly by burning hydrocarbon fuels ourselves

Scope 2: Indirect Emissions – These are emissions made by others on our behalf, where the supply is under our control and the degree of emissions is largely in direct proportion to the demand – the only thing we currently report under Scope 2 is our electricity supplies.

Scope 3: Indirect Emissions – This is principally our supply chain, where the carbon intensity of products or services can be unclear and not always linear in relation to demand

- 11 The proposed Environmental Strategy sets out how we will quantify our carbon emissions under each of these scopes, and requires the development of an emissions baseline in order to track progress in reducing them.
- 12 It then mandates the development of an Environmental Key Performance Indicators (KPI) dashboard for internal monitoring purposes, supplier engagement to reduce Scope 3 emissions, the development of a Procurement Awareness training package, and the adoption of a recognised Environmental Management System.
- 13 Finally, it sets out a requirement to develop and implement the following subordinate plans / strategies setting out how emissions will be minimised:
 - Social Value and Sustainable Procurement Strategy
 - Fleet Decarbonisation Plan
 - Waste Reduction Strategy
 - Heating Decarbonisation Plan
 - Power Decarbonisation Plan
- 14 The development of these documents is being undertaken in consultation with Authority Members through the Working Group.

IMPLICATIONS

Well-being Objectives	Direct implication towards meeting one of the Authority's long-term improvement and well-being objectives
Budget	The proposed Environmental Strategy has implications for both capital and operational budgets within each financial year to calendar year 2030. These are not yet quantified.
Legal	Supports compliance with improvement planning, well-being and environment legislation
Staffing	No known impact on staffing levels
Equalities/Human Rights/ Welsh Language	The impact of specific actions on these aspects will be assessed at the appropriate point in their development
Risks	Reduces the risks of legal non-compliance and of failing to budget and plan appropriately

Environmental Strategy 2023–2030

May 2023



Gwasanaeth Tân ac Achub
Fire and Rescue Service

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Mae'r ddogfen yma ar gael yn y Gymraeg
This document is also available in Welsh

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.0.1 As a Fire and Rescue Service, we recognise the importance of protecting and preserving our natural environment for future generations. We understand that our actions have a direct impact on the environment and we are committed to reducing our environmental footprint and promoting sustainability in all areas of our operations.
- 1.0.2 This Environmental Strategy outlines our commitment to reducing our environmental impact. This includes implementing sustainable practices in our daily operations, reducing our carbon emissions, and promoting environmental awareness amongst our staff and members of the community.
- 1.0.3 We are dedicated to being a responsible and sustainable organisation, and we pledge to continuously review and improve our environmental performance. This strategy has been prepared in order to provide a clear path for the Service to meet its environmental and sustainability obligations for the period to calendar year 2030, setting out clear policies and benchmarks against which progress may be measured.
- 1.0.4 North Wales Fire and Rescue Service provide fire protection and prevention services to around 687,000 people over a geographical area of 2,400 square miles, as well as hundreds of thousands of tourists and visitors who come to North Wales every year. There are around 328,742 domestic properties and 33,820 non-domestic properties under NWFRS' protection and the Service employs almost 1,000 staff in operational and support roles.
- 1.0.5 The Service covers three geographical areas, Gwynedd and Anglesey (West), Conwy and Denbighshire (Central) and Wrexham and Flintshire (East), with an estate of 47 buildings, ranging from whole-time, day-crewed, retained and community fire stations, administration offices, a garage workshop to sharing premises with North Wales Police and the Welsh Ambulance Service Trust. NWFRS attend around 1,879 fires, 958 Special Service Incidents, and around 2,517 false alarms of various kinds every year.

2.0 POLICY CONTEXT

2.1 Legislation

2.1.1 The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 requires public bodies to consider the long-term impacts of decisions in a number of ways. The relevant duties to the preparation of an environmental strategy for the Service fall under the heading 'A Resilient Wales':

- 1. Biodiversity and Soil** Maintain and enhance the natural environment through managing land appropriately to create healthy functioning ecosystems
- 2. Natural Green Space** Support social resilience and community well-being
- 3. Knowledge of Nature** Increase awareness of the importance of a biodiverse natural environment with healthy functioning ecosystems
- 4. Water and Air Quality** Support ecological resilience, making the environment healthier for wildlife and people

2.1.2 The Environment (Wales) Act 2016 sets out an ambition for the Welsh Government to reduce emissions of greenhouse gases in Wales to net zero by the year 2050.

2.1.3 In accordance with this duty, the Welsh Government has prepared a series of interim carbon budgets, including under Carbon Budget 3 (CB3) an ambition for the Welsh public sector to be net zero carbon by 2030. This is binding on the Welsh Government as a whole, and not specific public bodies.

2.1.4 Section 6 of the Environment (Wales) Act 2016 places a duty upon the Service to report on biodiversity and resilience of ecosystems within its estate every three years from the end of 2019.

2.1.5 The Service is a signatory to the Emergency Services Environment and Sustainability Group (ESESG) Sustainability Charter, which sets out the following relevant commitments:

1. Work towards net zero carbon emissions through improving the energy efficiency of our estate and sustainable business and personal travel.
2. Improve resource efficiency and adopt circular economy approaches to reducing waste and save money.
3. Restore and enhance local biodiversity through considered management of our estates.
4. Adapt to inevitable climate change through proactively managing our ability to respond to extreme weather events and changes to service demand.
5. Take action to avoid or mitigate pollution of water courses.
6. Minimise our reliance on fossil fuels by actively seeking to generate renewable energy at our sites, and through the adoption of greener technologies and fuels for our fleet.

2.2 National Targets

- 2.2.1 As a Public Sector Organisation, it is important to be aware of and consider both local and national environmental improvement targets.
- 2.2.2 Environmental targets have been set by Welsh Government within key strategies including 'One Wales : One Planet' and 'Towards Net Zero Waste'. These outline targets for the reduction in greenhouse gases and waste to landfill which puts a requirement on both Public and Private sector organisations to measure and reduce these emissions year-on-year.
- 2.2.3 The Welsh Government aspire to be the first Refill Nation with the aim of reducing single-use plastic bottles.
- 2.2.4 In 2018, DEFRA published its 25-year Environmental Plan which outlines targets in relation to clean air, water, biodiversity, sustainable resource consumption, minimising waste, biosecurity and enhancing the natural environment.

3.0 MEASURING PROGRESS

3.1 Overview

- 3.1.1 Measuring progress is at the core of our environmental strategy. It allows the Service to track progress towards our specified targets and identify areas where we can improve.
- 3.1.2 In Section 3.2.1 (below) we outline how we will develop the key indicators that the Service will use to measure its progress in reducing its environmental impact. These indicators will focus on areas such as energy consumption, waste reduction and carbon emissions, and will be used to set targets and track progress over time.
- 3.1.3 By regularly monitoring and reporting on these indicators, the Service will be able to ensure that it is on course to environmental objectives and make any necessary adjustments.

3.2 Targets

- 3.2.1 We will measure our progress by:
- Establishing a carbon emissions baseline, against which we can measure progress in reducing our carbon footprint
 - Following the Targets set out in this Strategy – with progress being reported in departmental / corporate improvement plans and reviewed regularly by the Environment and Sustainability Working Group
 - Adopting an Environmental Management System to a recognised standard (such as ISO:14001 or Green Dragon)
 - Preparing a monthly Environmental KPI dashboard
 - Submitting a quarterly environmental update to the Land and Property Committee
 - Submitting annual carbon emissions audits to Welsh Government
 - Preparing a Biodiversity Report and Action Plan every three years

4.0 SUSTAINABILITY IN THE COMMUNITY

4.1 Overview

- 4.1.1 As a public body, we endeavour to have a positive presence in the community we serve and give opportunity for the involvement of the public where possible. Throughout the year, fire stations hold their own Open Days for their local community, hold school visits and open their doors to community project groups.
- 4.1.2 The Service carries out extensive work with schools, businesses and local communities to promote fire safety and prevention. The potential for serious damage to our environment, often in sensitive areas, by the impact of countryside fires is a serious concern, the impact of deliberate fire setting undermines social and economic confidence and draws on resources which could be utilised more effectively elsewhere.
- 4.1.3 Reducing arson helps to protect and maintain the quality and on-going viability of the environment and places where we live, work, learn and spend our leisure time.
- 4.1.4 It is important to educate and raise awareness about the impact of arson on the environment. We should encourage sustainability and environmental education when visiting schools in an attempt to highlight the amount of deliberate fires in the community.

4.2 Targets

- 4.2.1 Over the period of this strategy we will:
- Promote community safety to prevent fires and other incidents from occurring
 - Deliver the Wales Arson Reduction Strategy objectives
 - Deliver the objectives set out in our three-yearly Biodiversity Report and Action Plans
 - Seek and develop inter-agency partnerships in accordance with the Future Generation Well-being Goals and the Environment (Wales) Act 2016
 - Engage with schools and colleges within the Service area to raise awareness of the dangers of fire



5.0 SUSTAINABLE PROCUREMENT

5.1 Overview

- 5.1.1 Sustainable procurement is the process of acquiring goods and services that meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. It is a key component in social responsibility and environmental stewardship.
- 5.1.2 As a responsible public service, we recognise the importance of sustainable procurement and are committed to implementing a comprehensive policy that promotes environmental, social and economic sustainability. We aim to minimise the environmental impact of our operations, support the local communities we serve, and promote fair labour practices.
- 5.1.3 By collaborating with other Fire and Rescue Services and public sector organisations within Wales we aim to improve our performance in areas of sustainable procurement, with the aim of implementing best practice standards for the Welsh public sector.
- 5.1.4 We endeavour to collaborate and benchmark against other emergency services and public sector organisations in order to measure our performance and ensure continuous improvement. All procurement activity over agreed levels is undertaken by North Wales Police on behalf of the Service.
- 5.1.5 As a service, we ensure supplies, services and works are not only procured in accordance with public sector regulations, but also in a way that allows Small to Medium Enterprises (SMEs) to develop. This is a key element of our Social Value obligation under the Well-being of Future Generations Act (2015). As a public body, we seek to make our procurement process more sustainable and therefore commit to the Value Wales Public Sector Sustainable Procurement Programme.

5.2 Targets

- 5.2.1 Over the period of this strategy we will:
- Work with WRAP Cymru and/or similar schemes, to gain expert insight into ways in which the sustainability of our procurement process can be achieved.
 - Prepare and implement a Social Value and Sustainable Procurement Strategy reflecting best practice within Wales. This will ensure procurement frameworks and contracts measure social value and sustainability during the tendering process, and will outline our approach to sourcing goods and services which are environmentally friendly, socially responsible and economically viable.
 - Explore options for local procurement to be delivered via national/regional collaboration both within the fire and rescue sector and across other blue light agencies.
 - Continue to work with Fire Aid to ensure that equipment is recycled where possible.
 - Develop a procurement awareness training package, embedding core principles of social value and sustainability at all levels of the Service.



6.0 ENERGY CONSUMPTION

6.1 Overview

- 6.1.1 As a Fire and Rescue Service we recognise the importance of reducing our energy consumption across our estate. We are continually improving our system for monitoring consumption and are installing energy saving initiatives where possible to reduce our carbon footprint.
- 6.1.2 The heating of our buildings is undertaken using a variety of hydrocarbon fuel sources, which are inherently unsustainable and which we will seek to eliminate.
- 6.1.3 We continually seek the most efficient and green energy tariffs and currently have a small number of sites which have solar photovoltaic (PV) panels installed, with the intention to increase this over the plan period and increase the amount of renewable energy generated across our estate wherever possible.

6.2 Targets

- 6.2.1 Over the period of this strategy we will:
- Work with Re:fit Cymru and/or similar schemes, to enable energy efficiency retrofits to our estate in a fiscally neutral manner where possible.
 - Engage with the Welsh Government Energy Service regularly to remain informed on development in policy, technology and potential funding opportunities.
 - Continuously monitor the energy consumption and comparative energy efficiency of our buildings to identify any areas of concern.
 - Prepare and implement a Heating Decarbonisation Plan, setting out the manner in which we propose to address our Scope 1 emissions arising from heating our estate within the period of this strategy.
 - Prepare and implement a Power Decarbonisation Plan, setting out the manner in which we propose to minimise the carbon emissions arising from our electricity consumption.
 - Engage proactively with our staff and other building users to educate and encourage efficient energy use and other environmentally-positive behaviours.
 - Consider wider efficiency in use of public resources by making our estate available for community purposes where possible



7.0 WATER CONSUMPTION

7.1 Overview

- 7.1.1 As an organisation that relies heavily on water for a number of our activities, it is essential to use it in a sustainable way. Not only water consumption at incidents but also water that is used throughout our estate.
- 7.1.2 Over the years, we have installed a number of water saving devices in our buildings but more can be done in terms of rainwater harvesting and grey water reuse.
- 7.1.3 It is important to raise awareness to all employees to understand the true cost and scale of our water usage by the service to ensure water is used sustainably.

7.2 Targets

- 7.2.1 Over the period of this strategy we will:
- Quantify corporate water consumption throughout our estate
 - Consider rainwater harvesting, grey water use and similar water conservation measures whenever refurbishment or rebuilding works are undertaken
 - Educate and encourage staff and other users of our premises on water conservation and efficiency
 - Engage with Welsh Water to make use of treated wastewater for firefighting purposes where possible

8.0 OPERATIONAL ACTIVITIES

8.1 Overview

- 8.1.1 The Service regularly assists the public in dealing with the outcomes that arise from climate change such as flooding and wildfires.
- 8.1.2 We are committed to ensuring that we operate our Service in an effective manner that give appropriate cognisance to the effect of our activities, whether that is due to our usage of natural resources, our use of firefighting media such as foam, or whether it is our efforts to minimise the impact of the waste products e.g. water run-off or smoke into the environment.
- 8.1.3 As a Service, we continually review our operational procedures and equipment and fully embed the principle of environmental impact assessment into all our activities in order to fully consider the wider environment.

8.2 Targets

- 8.2.1 Over the period of this strategy we will:
- Ensure that procurement processes for the acquisition of new operational equipment includes consideration of all environmental factors, including 'total end of life' disposal impacts / costs
 - Work closely with partners including Natural Resources Wales to ensure best practice and minimise our impact on the environment and local biodiversity
 - Engage with local authority environmental staff and local nature partnerships to explore adding biodiversity and environmental sensitivity layers on our Mobile Data Terminal (MDT) systems



9.0 WASTE AND RECYCLING

9.1 Overview

- 9.1.1 Waste is a considerable issue for an organisation which covers a large geographic area. Reducing the amount of refuse we produce in the first instance is one of the best chances we have to avoid sending waste to landfill. As a public body, we need to be accountable for the amount of waste we produce and reducing at source will be one of our main objectives going forward.
- 9.1.2 In 2010, Welsh Government produced a Waste Strategy for Wales to give targets for waste minimisation for different sectors. 'Towards Zero Waste' provides the details to inform organisations how to be a zero-waste nation by 2050. As outlined within this strategy, we aim to maximise recycling, minimise the amount of residual waste produced and send as little waste as possible to landfill.
- 9.1.3 As a Service, we work towards annual reduction targets in relation to our waste and regularly review our waste contracts to ensure we have the best fit possible to help us with the targets. Due to the geography of the Service area, this can provide a number of logistical challenges on a day to day basis.
- 9.1.4 As a Service which produces its fair share of waste, we must continue to take measures, as far as is reasonably practicable, to prevent waste and use recyclable / biodegradable products where available. By considering and applying the waste hierarchy, it gives priority to preventing the creation of waste in the first instance. It is also important to educate our staff to be aware that waste minimisation at source is much more sustainable than the recycling of waste materials. This can avoid or reduce the production of waste water in the first place.

9.2 Targets

- 9.2.1 Over the period of this strategy we will:
- Prepare and implement a Waste Reduction Strategy, which will encourage the re-use of materials, reduce the volume of waste to landfill, promote recycling and sustainable purchasing, and reduce the use of single-use plastics.





10.0 FLEET

10.1 Overview

- 10.1.1 Our fleet plays a crucial role in responding to emergencies and keeping our communities safe. However, it is also important that we consider the environmental impact of our fleet operations. We are committed to reducing the emissions and environmental footprint of our fleet, as well as to promoting sustainable transportation within our Service. We aim to lead by example and demonstrate that it is possible to balance safety and environmental responsibility in our operations.
- 10.1.2 There is a large transport fleet including 54 fire appliances, one incident command unit and 31 'special' vehicles – such as all-terrain vehicles and foam carriers; there are also three aerial ladder platforms, portable power tools, lifting and winching and other specialist equipment to enable us to respond to many different types of incidents.
- 10.1.3 Our fleet can be described within three distinct categories. The red fleet consists of operational and response vehicles. The white fleet is entirely Service-provided, and the grey fleet consists of employee-owned vehicles used on official business.
- 10.1.4 The principal fuel used within the fleet is diesel, however a small number of vehicles and portable appliances are fuelled by unleaded petrol. The Scope 1 carbon emissions arising from our fleet operations in FY 2021/22 were nearly 614 tonnes of CO₂ equivalent.
- 10.1.5 The typical lifecycle of an operational fire appliance is in excess of fifteen years, with a rolling programme of replacement.

10.2 Targets

- 10.2.1 Over the period of this strategy we will:
- Prepare and implement a Fleet Decarbonisation Plan, setting out how we propose to eliminate our Scope 1 emissions arising from transportation
 - Continue to provide a salary sacrifice employee car leasing scheme where viable to do so, to incentivise switching to Electric Vehicles
 - Continue to participate in approved Cycle to Work schemes where viable to do so
 - Seek opportunities to expand EV charging capacity throughout our estate
 - Promote car pooling and sustainable transportation to staff and partners
 - Work in partnership with other public bodies when deploying any alternative fuels to promote best value, operational efficiency and supply resilience

11.0 BIODIVERSITY

11.1 Overview

- 11.1.1 It is widely recognised that biodiversity is under pressure from a range of influences and that habitats and species continue to decline, therefore, it is vital that we maintain and enhance our biodiversity to ensure it remains healthy, resilient and capable of adapting to change. The effect of climate change on biodiversity over the coming decades is likely to be significant, including a further loss of habitat and a potential increase in invasive species.
- 11.1.2 Much of our Service area is made up of rural land, with a significant area lying within the Snowdonia National Park. These areas are home to a great deal of wildlife, supporting a rich variety of flora and fauna which includes many species native to Britain and some unique to Wales.
- 11.1.3 We want to encourage and enhance biodiversity on our sites and surrounding areas where possible and protect the local environment in which we operate.
- 11.1.4 We aim to help protect and conserve the natural environment within our Service area by working closely with Natural Resources Wales, local environmental groups and specialists who can advise on the best approach when it comes to incidents involving these areas.
- 11.1.5 Section 6 of the Environment (Wales) Act 2016 ensures that all public bodies work towards conserving these important environments. In addition to legislation, the Welsh Government has produced a Nature Recovery Plan, which consists of the Strategy for Nature and the commitment to biodiversity in Wales, the issues needed to be addressed and the objectives for action; an Action Plan to meet the objectives to reverse the decline of biodiversity; and the governance structure, roles and responsibilities of everybody involved in the delivery of action for biodiversity in Wales.

11.2 Targets

- 11.2.1 Over the period of this strategy we will:
- Prepare a Biodiversity Report and Action Plan every three years, setting out work undertaken and plans for the coming period in relation to protection of ecosystems and enhancement of biodiversity.



Report to	North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority
Date	17 July 2023
Lead Officer	Stewart Forshaw - Deputy Chief Fire Officer
Contact Officer	Anthony Jones - Head of Planning, Performance and Transformation
Subject	Performance Monitoring: Apr 2022 – Mar 2023



PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1 To provide information about incident activity during the 2022/23 financial year; performance in relation to the North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority's (the Authority) improvement and well-being objectives; and other notable incident activity.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 2 During the 2022/23 financial year, North Wales Fire and Rescue Service (the Service) attended 5,896 emergency incidents. This is an increase of 10.1% compared with the 2021/22 financial year (5,355).
- 3 Attendances at non-fire emergencies, which are classified as Special Service Calls (SSCs), increased 26.4% to 1,211. This follows a change in policy during 2021/22 regarding attendance at SSCs, to provide more assistance to the public and partner agencies, whilst at the same time increasing the visibility of the Service in the community. fx
- 4 The number of accidental fires in the home (ADFs) attended during the financial year declined to 344, compared to 400 during 2021/22. I am pleased to report that no accidental deaths in dwelling fires occurred during the financial year, and that there was also a reduction in the number of serious injuries, from 5 to 3, compared to 2021/22. The Service continued to deliver fire prevention interventions and initiatives to support fire safety in the homes and communities of North Wales.
- 5 Wildfires continued to be an area of focus for the Service, which can be a result of extreme weather events linked to climate change, and is an area of growth in the UK in comparison to the reduction of house fires during the past decade. Wildfires can be particularly challenging incidents for the Service to deal with because of their erratic nature, potential size, scale, and intensity, and because of the rural and rural-urban interface environments in which they tend to occur.

- 6 As defined by the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC), a wildfire is a grassland, woodland or crop fire that:
 1. involves a geographical area of at least one hectare (10,000 square metres or 100m x 100m);
 2. has a sustained flame length of more than 1.5 metres;
 3. requires a committed resource of at least 4 fire and rescue appliances/resources;
 4. requires resources to be committed for at least 6 hours;
 5. presents a serious threat to life, environment, property, and infrastructure.
- 7 During the 2022/23 financial year, there was an increase to 35 in the number of wildfires that were attended by a combined total of 108 vehicles for over 646 hours.
- 8 There were 2,674 False Alarms attended during the financial year, an increase of 6.2% on the previous financial year. This was due to an 9.6% increase in attendances at fire alarms due to apparatus (AFAs) from 1,398 to 1,532, and to malicious false alarms from 43 to 52 (20.9%). The Service received 1,485 Commercial AFA calls, of which 17 (1.1%) were attended and 1,468 (98.9%) were not attended. In addition 446 hospital AFA calls were received, of which 203 (45.5%) were attended and 243 (54.5%) were not attended.
- 9 The changes to our attendance policy to incidents at HMP Berwyn implemented during the pandemic, and the fire safety advice delivered during 2022/23, resulted in a reduction of fires attended at the prison to 19 from 22 during 2021/22.
- 10 Fire crew's availability performance in accordance with the 20 stations availability target increased 3.5% to 324 days (88.8%) compared with 313 days (85.8%) in the previous financial year.

RECOMMENDATION

- 11 It is recommended that Members:
 - i) note the information provided

OBSERVATIONS FROM THE EXECUTIVE PANEL 19 JUNE 2023

- 12 The Executive Panel considered the performance monitoring report at its meeting of 19 June 2023 and focused on the positive news that there had been no accidental dwelling fire related deaths during 2022/23. In answer to a Member's question, it was recorded that this was due to over a decade of preventative work by the Service. Members noted the content of the report.

INFORMATION

13 **All Incidents**

The upward trend in the number of incidents attended continued, with 10.1% more incidents attended during the financial year, 5,896 compared with 5,355 in the previous financial year. The main contributor to the increase was Special Service Calls which increased 26.4%.

14 **Fires**

Fires attended during the financial year increased 7.0% to 2,011 compared with 1,880 during 2021/22.

15 **Grassland, Woodland and Crop Fires**

Grassland, Woodland and Crop fires increased 26.5% to 472 from 373 during 2021/22. Secondary Accidental Grassland, Woodland and Crop fires increased to 306 from 234, with 'Grassland, Pasture, Grazing etc.' and 'Heathland or Moorland' fires being the main contributors, increasing from 68 to 94 and 81 to 107 respectively. Increases were also recorded in 'Tree Scrub - includes single trees not in garden' (20 to 31); 'Hedge' (17 to 29) and 'Straw/stubble burning' (1 to 9).

16 Secondary Deliberate Grassland, woodland and crop fires increased 15.2% from 125 to 144. Whilst the main contributors to the increase were 'Grassland, Pasture, Grazing etc.' (47 to 64) and 'Tree Scrub - includes single trees not in garden' (15 to 24), "Heathland or moorland" fires reduced from 40 to 27.

17 **Wildfires**

During the 2022/23 financial year, although there was an increase in attendance at wildfires to 35 from 34 in the previous financial year, 108 vehicles attended compared to 136. The time spent at scene declined to 646 hours, compared to 682 hours during the previous financial year.

18 **Primary Fires**

Primary fires declined 3.1% from 881 to 854 compared with the same period of 2021/22 and were 3.4% below the 3-year average of 884. Although accidental primary fires decreased 3.7% from 738 to 711 on the back of a reduction in accidental primary dwelling fires, accidental primary fires were 2.0% above the 3-year average of 697. The number of deliberate primary fires were unchanged at 143 compared to the previous financial year and were 23.5% below the 3-year average of 187.

- 19 **Secondary Fires**
Secondary fires, which were 23.2% above the 3-year average of 842, increased 18.0% from 879 to 1,037, due to an 20.2% increase in Accidental Secondary fires (550 to 661). Whilst increases were recorded in 'Grassland, woodland and crops' (234 to 306) and 'Other outdoors (including land)' (149 to 205), there was a reduction in 'Outdoor structures' (140 to 115). Deliberate Secondary fires increased 14.3% (329 to 376), wherein 'Grassland, woodland and crops' and 'Other outdoors (including land)' increased 15.2% (125 to 144) and 23.0% (126 to 155) respectively.
- 20 **Chimney Fires**
Chimney fires, which were unchanged at 120 compared with the previous financial year, have decreased 17.2% compared with the same period in 2018/19 (145) and were 14.9% below the 3-year average of 141.
- 21 **Accidental Dwelling Fires (ADFs)**
The Service attended 14.0% fewer ADFs - 344 compared with 400 during the 2021/22 financial year. ADF's in 'House - Single Occupancy' and 'Bungalow - Single Occupancy' led the decrease from 235 to 198 and from 62 to 40 respectively. The fire main causes at the ADFs were 'Cooking – other cooking', 'Combustible Articles too Close to Heat Source (or fire)'; 'Faulty fuel supply – electricity' and 'Cooking – Chip Pan/Deep Pan Fryer' which decreased from 80 to 78, 89 to 63; 41 to 34 and 26 to 10 respectively. There was however an increase in 'Overheating, Unknown Cause' from 12 to 20.
- 22 **Fatalities/Casualties in ADFs**
There were no fatalities in ADFs during the financial year compared with 5 during 2021/22. The number of casualties in ADFs decreased from 113 to 71, with 3 people sustaining serious injuries compared to 5 during 2021/22.
- 23 **Smoke Detectors – ADF's**
Smoke/heat detectors were present at the majority of accidental fires in dwellings during the financial year (87.2%). ADF's where a smoke/heat detector was fitted, operated and raised the alarm, reduced from 190 to 176.
- 24 Where a smoke/heat detector was fitted - operated but did not raise the alarm, incidents reduced from 78 to 43.
- 24 ADF's where no detector was fitted decreased from 50 to 44, and where a detector was fitted and did not operate, the number of incidents remained unchanged at 81.

- 25 **Deliberate Primary Fires in Non-Residential Buildings**
Deliberate primary fires in non-residential buildings declined from 54 to 48, with 19 occurring at HMP Berwyn.
- 26 **False Alarms**
The upward trend in False Alarms continued with the Service attending 2,674 false alarms – 6.2% more than in the same period of 2021/22 (2,517), and 12.9% more than the 3-year average of 2,369. Those originating from AFA systems increased 9.6% from 1,398 to 1,532 and represented 57.3% of false alarm attendances.
- 27 **Non-Residential Automatic Fire Alarms (AFA)**
Non-Residential AFAs increased 27.0%, from 200 to 254 mainly due to 'Hospitals and Medical Care' which increased from 134 to 186. The main causes of activation in Non-Residential AFAs were 'Faulty' (85 to 95); 'Accidentally/carelessly set off' (35 to 40); 'Other' (10 to 18) and 'Chemicals/aerosols' (10 to 19).
- 28 **Other-Residential AFAs**
There was a 16.5% increase in 'Other-Residential' AFAs from 97 to 113, with 'Nurses'/Doctors' Accommodation' and 'Hotel/motel' increasing from 9 to 25 and 15 to 23 respectively. 'Student Hall of Residence' and 'Residential Home' however, decreased from 32 to 20 and 23 to 15 respectively. Although the main causes of activation in 'Other-Residential' was 'Cooking/burnt toast', with a slight increase from 27 to 30, 'Steam' and 'Other' increased from 4 to 9 and from 3 to 7 respectively. There was however a decrease in 'Faulty' from 31 to 26.
- 29 **Dwelling AFAs**
AFAs in Dwellings continued on an upward trend, increasing by 5.8% from 1,100 to 1,165, with 'House – Single Occupancy' being the lead contributor to the increase, rising from 278 to 338, followed by 'Bungalow – single occupancy' increasing from 300 to 340. Decreases were recorded in 'Purpose Built Flat/Maisonette – multiple occupancy' and 'Self-contained Sheltered Housing' from 393 to 361 and from 87 to 74 respectively.
- 30 Of the 1,165 Dwelling AFAs, 'Cooking/Burnt Toast' was the main cause of activation, increasing from 574 to 600. Slight increases were also recorded in 'Other' (58 to 69); 'Accidentally/Carelessly Set Off' (51 to 60); 'Water Intrusion' (2 to 14), and where no cause was determined (5 to 13).
- 31 **Good Intent False Alarms**
Good intent false alarms increased marginally by 1.3% from 1,076 to 1,090, due to increases in 'False Alarm – Property not found' (52 to 85).

- 32 'Other Outdoors (including land)' false alarms made with good intent decreased from 295 to 242 on the back of decreased 'Controlled burning' (262 to 216).
- 33 'Dwelling' good intent false alarms increased 8.0% from 399 to 431 due to increases in 'Other' and 'Other cooking', 199 to 210 and 52 to 86 respectively.
- 34 'Non-Residential' false alarms made with good intent increased from 74 to 83 due to increases in 'Other' (24 to 31), and 'Overheating Appliance' (1 to 9).
- 35 Good intent false alarms in 'Grassland, Woodland and Crops' decreased from 127 to 116, with 'Controlled burning' and 'Reported incident/Location not found' reducing from 95 to 88 and 22 to 16 respectively.
- 36 **Malicious False Alarms**
Malicious False Alarms saw an increase from 43 to 52 on the back of increased 'Dwelling' which increased from 21 to 36.
- 37 **Special Service Calls**
Special Service calls increased 26.4% to 1,211 from 958 during the previous financial year and were 63.6% above the 3-year average of 740. This can be attributed to the change in policy aimed at increasing the presence of the fire service in the community when needed.
- 38 'Other than RTC' increased 30.1% (751 to 977). The main contributor to the increase was 'Assist Other Agencies' which increased 36.3% (226 to 355). Increases were also recorded in 'Effecting entry/exit' (77 to 98); 'Lift Release' (75 to 87); 'Other Rescue/Release of Persons' (60 to 92); separating people from objects (70 to 80), 'Animal assistance incidents' (6 to 46), and 'No Action (not false alarm)' (52 to 80). There were decreases however, in 'Flooding' and 'Make Safe (not RTC)' from 66 to 53 and 49 to 17 respectively.
- 39 **Road Traffic Collisions (RTC) Incidents**
The Service attended 13.0% more RTCs (207 to 234), where 69 (29.5%) involved the extrication or release of persons. Where the Service was called upon to make a vehicle or scene safe, attendance increased 24.1% (83 to 103). Although the Service attended more RTCs, the percentage of RTCs which involved the release or extrication of persons was at its lowest level since 2018/19 (39.4%) and was also lower than the 3-year average of 36.2%.

40 **Safe and Well Checks (SAWCs)**

The Service completed 18,052 SAWCs of which 6,162 (34.1%) were High Priority SAWCs. Of the High Priority SAWCs, 3,487 (56.6%) were referrals from a partner agency.

41 **Station Performance**

Planned 20 station availability was achieved on 324 days (88.8%) compared with 313 (85.8%) in the previous financial year. This however is still lower than the 363 days (99.5%) achieved in 2018/19.

IMPLICATIONS

Well-being Objectives	Helps the Authority to monitor its performance against the improvement and well-being objectives in the Corporate Plan 2021-24.
Budget	Helps to highlight any potential impacts on budget due to unanticipated incident activity.
Legal	Assists the Authority with ensuring that there are sufficient resources to meet demand.
Staffing	No implication identified.
Equalities/Human Rights/ Welsh Language	No implication identified.
Risks	Not satisfying legal requirements to report on and monitor performance that may impact on the ability to ensure that there are sufficient resources to meet demand.

NORTH WALES FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE



**Gwasanaeth Tân ac Achub
Fire and Rescue Service**

PERFORMANCE MONITORING REPORT

For the twelve months

April 2022 – March 2023

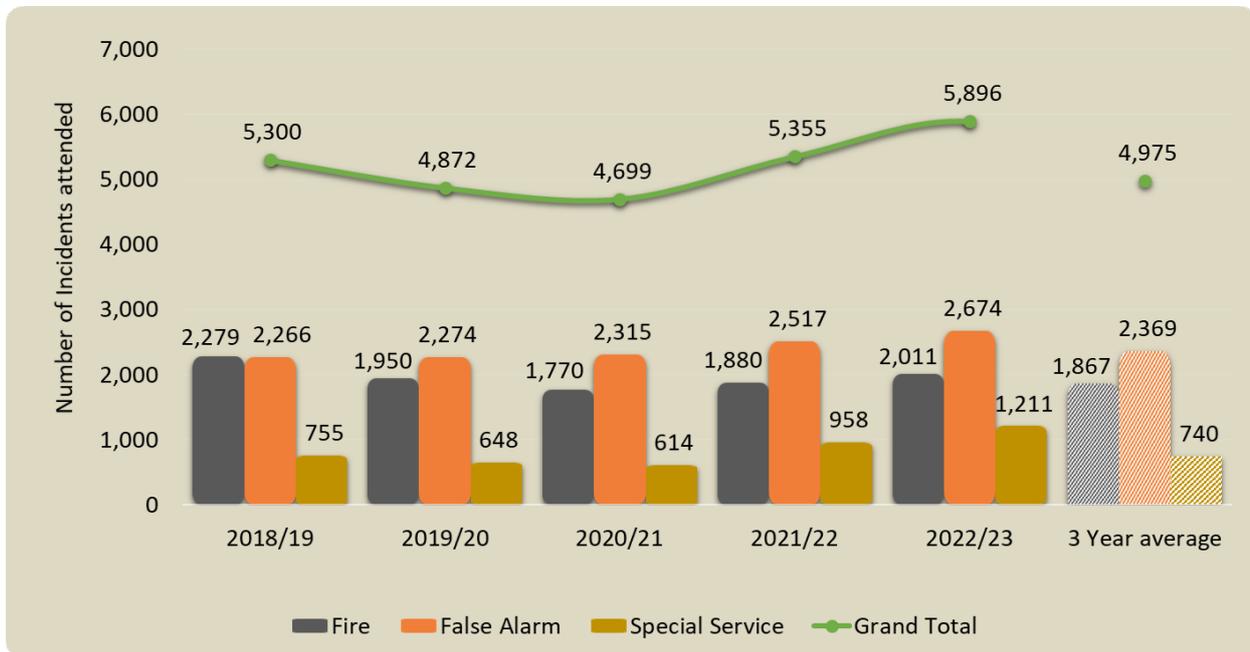
Figures are provisional and may be subject to minor amendment.

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1. All Incidents

1.1 During the 2022/23 financial year, the Service attended 5,896 emergency incidents and false alarms, a 10.1% increase on the previous financial year (5,355).



Category	Year	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Year-to-Date (YTD)	% change YTD	Average of 3 previous years	% change YTD / Average of 3 previous years
Total incidents attended	2022-23	1,575	1,878	1,211	1,232	5,896	↑ 10.1%	4,975	↑ 18.5%
	2021-22	1,322	1,415	1,254	1,364	5,355			
Total fires	2022-23	577	719	337	378	2,011	↑ 7.0%	1,867	↑ 7.7%
	2021-22	575	480	347	478	1,880			
Total special service incidents	2022-23	327	371	267	246	1,211	↑ 26.4%	740	↑ 63.6%
	2021-22	152	233	315	258	958			
Total false alarms	2022-23	671	788	607	608	2,674	↑ 6.2%	2,369	↑ 12.9%
	2021-22	595	702	592	628	2,517			

*The final two columns show: the average of the 3-previous financial years (based on the equivalent reporting period); the percentage change based on the difference between the current financial year and the 3-year average.

Narrative

Fires increase – The 7.0% increase in fires (from 1,880 to 2,011) can be attributed to the hot summer the UK and Wales was subject to, thus showing an increase of 144 incidents, a 7.7% increase over the 3-year average of 1,867.

AFA's (non-domestic) increase – We are aware of the increase in AFA's in non-domestic settings. These calls are predominately from BCUHB (numerous activation reasons). We continue to work with BCUHB in reducing these AFA activations. There is also an increase in domestic (dwelling) attendance to AFA's and this is referred to later in this report.

SSCs increase – The overall increase is due to a change in organisational policy in relation to attending SSCs; making crew more visible in the community.



2 Fires, by Category and Motive

2.1 A total of 2,011 fires were attended; a 7.0% increase from 1,880 in 2021/22.

2.2 Primary fires – There was a 3.1% decrease in primary fires, from 881 to 854 compared with the previous financial year and were 3.4% below the 3-year average of 884.

2.3 Secondary fires – There was an 18.0% increase in secondary fires, from 879 to 1,037, and were 23.2% above the 3-year average of 842.

2.4 Chimney fires – The number of chimney fires remained unchanged at 120, the same as during the previous financial year, and were 14.9% below the 3-year average of 141.



Category	Year	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Year-to-Date (YTD)	% change YTD	Average of 3 previous years	% change YTD / Average of 3 previous years
Primary fires	2022-23	226	236	193	199	854	↓ 3.1%	884	↓ 3.4%
	2021-22	251	229	200	201	881			
Secondary fires	2022-23	332	476	100	129	1,037	↑ 18.0%	842	↑ 23.2%
	2021-22	293	244	110	232	879			
Chimney fires	2022-23	19	7	44	50	120	→ 0.0%	141	↓ 14.9%
	2021-22	31	7	37	45	120			

*The final two columns show: the average of the 3 previous financial years (based on the equivalent reporting period); the percentage change based on the difference between the current financial year and the 3-year average.

Narrative

There was a year-on-year reduction in accidental primary fires. The reduction has been attributed to our ongoing prevention activities which are delivered during SAWCs and other engagements with the public.

The increase in both secondary accidental (from 550 to 661) and secondary deliberate (from 329 to 376) fires is attributed to the hot summer in the UK. In comparison, 2018/19 was also a very hot and dry summer in North Wales. Chimney Fires increased by 6 between Q3 and Q4 of the financial year. This is not unexpected following increases in utility fuel prices and the increased use of open and wood burning fires. NWFRS has been working with Scottish Power (SP) and other agencies regarding the provision of 'winter packs' to residents.

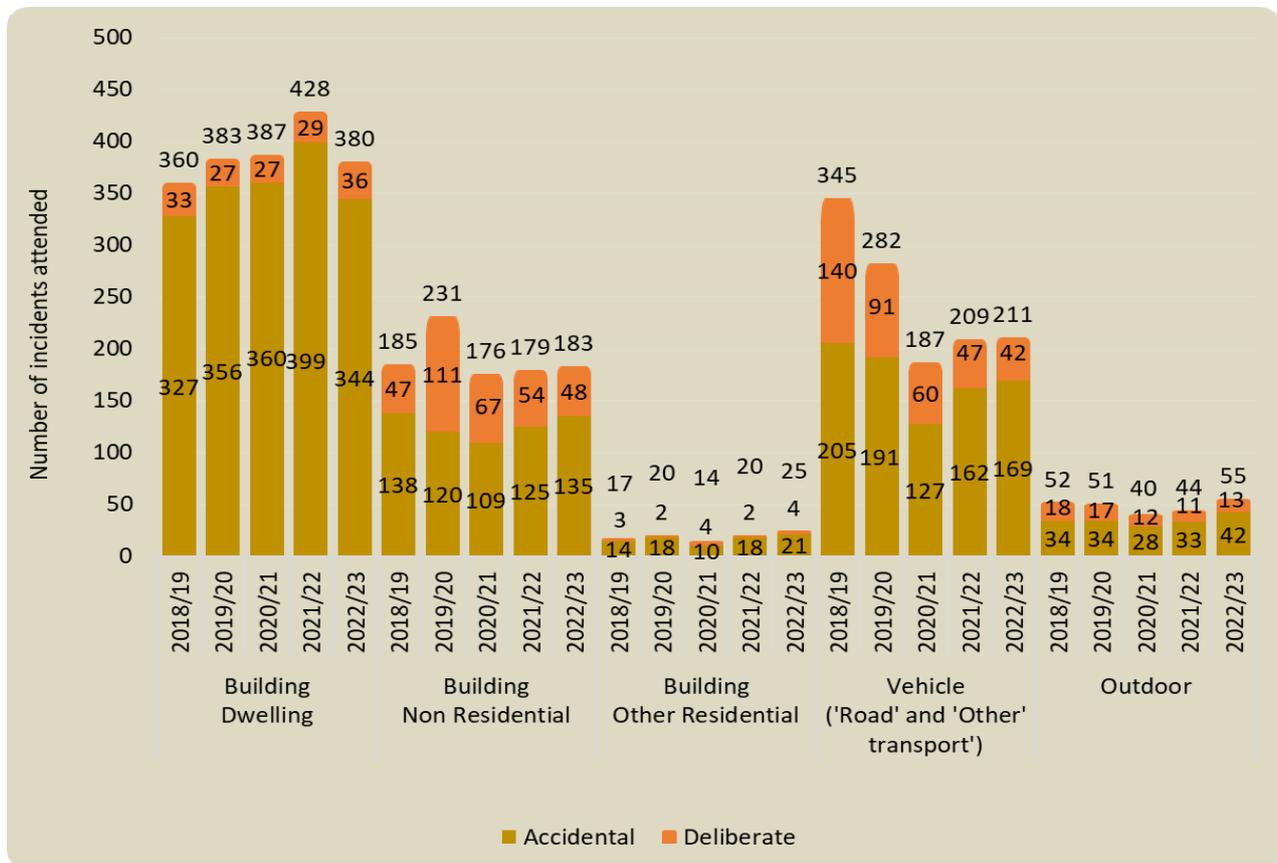
Actions taken to support communities and reduce fire events:

- 18,052 SAWCs have been delivered across North Wales in line with our current strategy;
- Work with strategic partners has continued, identifying potential risks to reduce deliberate fire incidents;
- Deliberate fire setting intervention schemes have been facilitated in-house and by DangerPoint;
- New Wales Wildfire Board has been established and the All Wales Wildfire Charter drafted to support the reduction in accidental and deliberate secondary fires;
- Prevention teams proactively attended farmers markets and agricultural shows including RWAS in July 2022 to raise the profile of impacts of Wildfires in North Wales;
- Campaign Steering Group (CSG) continued to work with Corporate Communications to proactively promote safety and Wildfire messaging across all media platforms;
- There was significant involvement with community Bonfire and Fireworks events across the service area.

3 Primary Fires, by Property Type and Motive



- 3.1 During the financial year, 48 primary fires were started deliberately at non-residential buildings, compared with 54 during 2021/22.
- 3.2 There were 19 deliberate fires at HMP Berwyn, compared with 22 in the previous financial year.



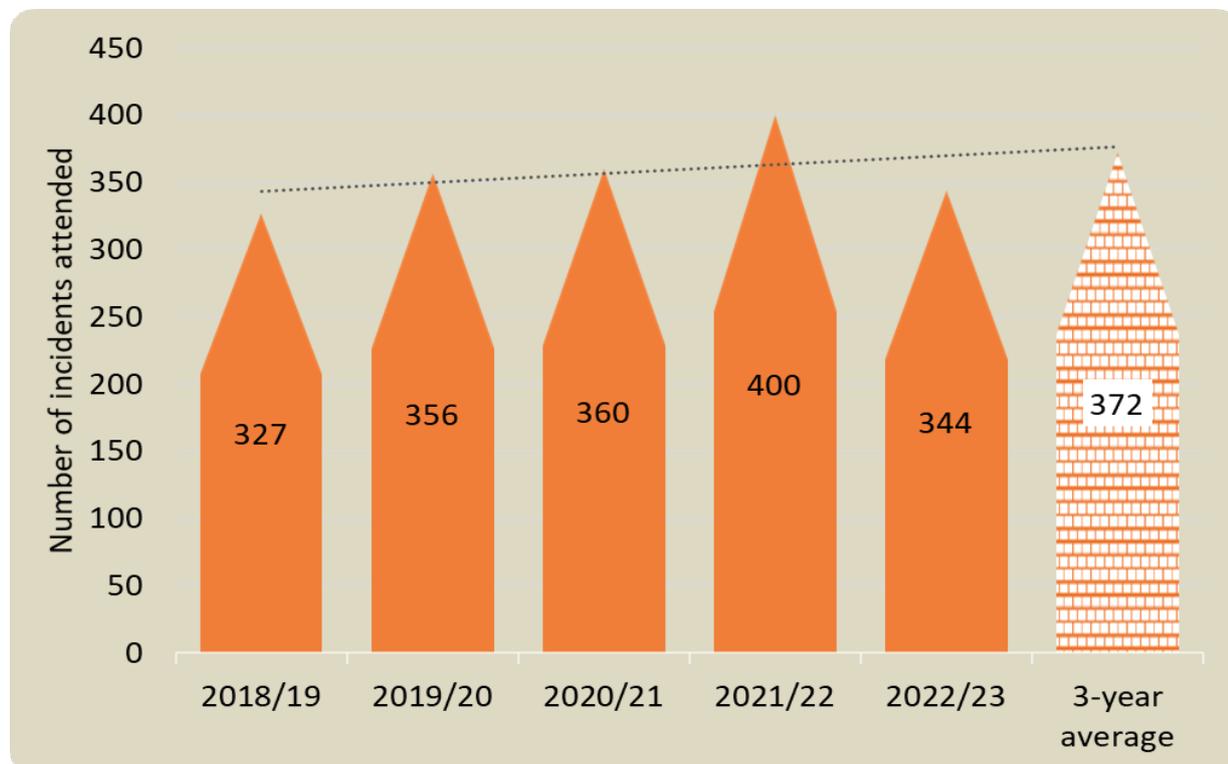
Category	Year	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Year-to-Date (YTD)	% change YTD	Average of 3 previous years	% change YTD / Average of 3 previous years
All deliberate primary fires	2022-23	41	49	24	29	143	→ 0.0%	187	↓ 23.5%
	2021-22	40	42	31	30	143			
All accidental primary fires	2022-23	185	187	169	170	711	↓ 3.5%	697	↑ 2.0%
	2021-22	211	187	169	171	737			

*The final two columns show: the average of the 3 previous financial years (based on the equivalent reporting period); the percentage change based on the difference between the current financial year and the 3-year average.



4 Accidental fires in dwellings

4.1 The Service attended 344 accidental dwelling fires during the reporting period, 55 (14.0%) less than during the previous financial year (400), and 7.5% below the 3-year average of 372.



Category	Year	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Year-to-Date (YTD)	% change YTD	Average of 3 previous years	% change YTD / Average of 3 previous years
Accidental fires in dwellings	2022-23	81	81	97	85	344	↓ 14.0%	372	↓ 7.5%
	2021-22	113	95	106	86	400			

*The final two columns show: the average of the 3 previous financial years (based on the equivalent reporting period); the percentage change based on the difference between the current financial year and the 3-year average.

Narrative

- There was a 14.0% reduction in the number of ADFs (344 from 400) and were 7.5% lower than the 3-year average of 372.

Actions taken to support communities and reduce ADFs:

- Ongoing work with regional hoarding groups to identify people at risk;
- Referrals continue to be received from partner agencies, totalling 31.8% (5,733) of all SAWCs delivered;
- Partnership Managers have explored new relationships with external partners to identify those persons most vulnerable to fire;
- A joint venture between NWFRS, Bangor University, and Catrefi Conwy was undertaken where StoveGuards were fitted in student accommodation to reduce cooker fires;
- Station Open days were reinvigorated which generated SAWCs and gave extra opportunity to provide safety advice;
- Local and national (Wales & NFCC) campaigns have been supported in line with our own Campaign Steering Group (CSG) calendar;
- Locally run and targeted outreach days have continued to be supported by external agencies. Areas are leafleted by Prevention teams who then return to provide SAWCs (Crews and HSSWs);
- Cost of Living 'drop in' campaign took place in Rhyl providing Prevention teams with the opportunity to give further safety advice;
- Proactive hot spotting campaigns following significant incidents produced SAWC referrals and community reassurance following incidents;
- Partnership between NWFRS and Cartrefi Conwy and Care & Repair continued to identify high priority referrals – we engage with vulnerable people who are discharged from hospital/care settings to provide interventions where required;
- Christmas safety activity included supporting local foodbanks and delivering safety talks to Ukrainian refugees.

5 Fatalities and casualties from accidental fires in dwellings

5.1 There were no ADF fatalities during the 2022/23 financial year, compared with 5 during the previous financial year. There were 3 serious, and 23 slight injuries, compared with 5 and 34 respectively. The number of precautionary checks decreased from 31 to 20, whilst the number of people requiring first aid at the scene also decreased from 43 to 25.

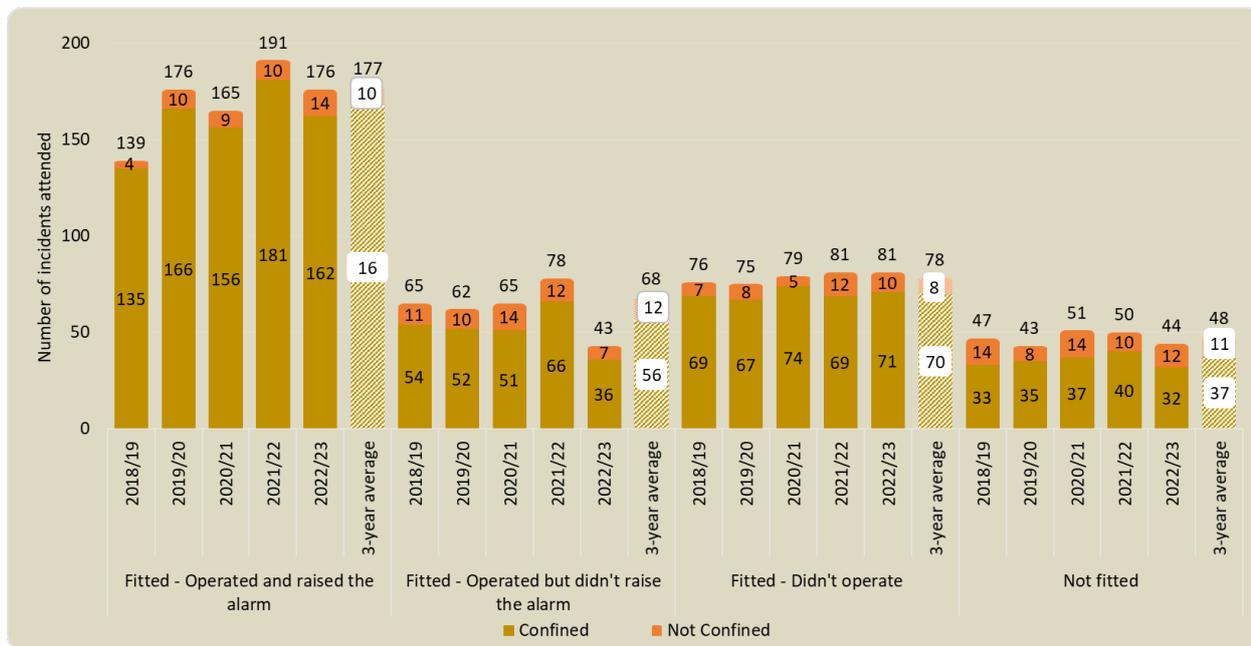
Severity of injury	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
Precautionary Check	13	19	33	31	20
First Aid	27	41	26	43	25
Injuries - Slight	11	26	29	34	23
Injuries - Serious	6	4	3	5	3
Fatality	5	3	5	5	0
Total	62	93	96	118	71

Category	Year	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Year-to-Date (YTD)	% change YTD	Average of 3 previous years	Change YTD / Average of 3 previous years
Injuries from accidental fires in dwellings	2022-23	10	37	14	10	71	↓ 37.2%	98	↓ 27.6%
	2021-22	43	23	30	17	113			
Deaths from accidental fires in dwellings	2022-23	0	0	0	0	0	↓ 100%		
	2021-22	3	0	0	2	5			



6 Smoke Detectors – Accidental Dwelling Fires (ADFs)

- 6.1 Smoke/heat detectors were present at the majority of ADFs, although not all went on to operate. At 44 of the ADFs, no detector was fitted.
- 6.2 Of the 344 ADFs, 301 were confined to the room of origin, the item first ignited, or there was heat/smoke damage only.



Category	Year	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Year-to-Date (YTD)	% change YTD	Average of 3 previous years	% change YTD / Average of 3 previous years
Smoke detector fitted which operated and raised alarm	2022-23	36	45	49	46	176	↓ 7.9%	177	↓ 0.6%
	2021-22	54	46	55	36	191			
Smoke detector fitted which operated but didn't raise the alarm	2022-23	17	4	10	12	43	↓ 44.9%	69	↓ 37.7%
	2021-22	20	20	16	22	78			
Smoke detector didn't operate	2022-23	22	19	25	15	81	→ 0.0%	78	↑ 3.8%
	2021-22	26	16	21	18	81			
Smoke detector not fitted	2022-23	6	13	13	12	44	↓ 12.0%	48	↓ 8.3%
	2021-22	13	13	14	10	50			

*The final two columns show: the average of the 3 previous financial years (based on the equivalent reporting period); the percentage change based on the difference between the current financial year and the 3-year average.

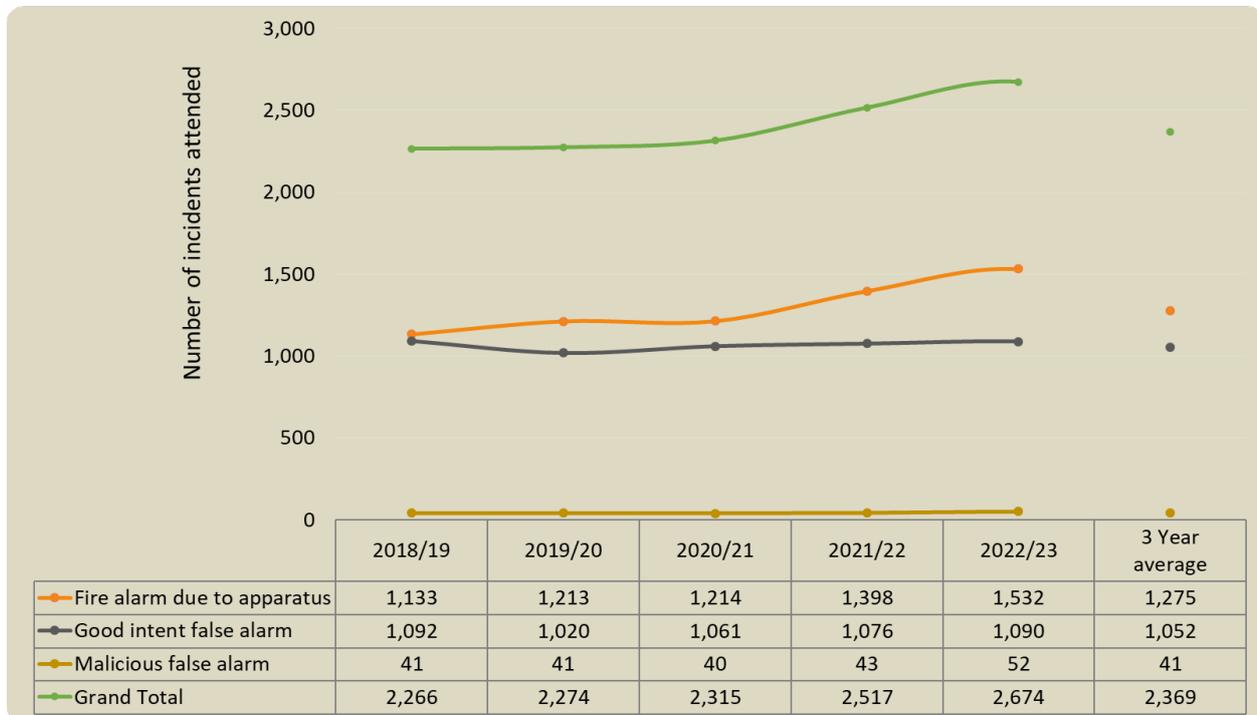
Actions taken to support communities by increasing smoke alarm ownership and safety education:

- The Service aimed to deliver 20,000 SAWCs during the financial year; 18,052 were achieved. The target for 23/24 will be 17,500;
- Continued to work with partners to identify the most vulnerable people in our communities and provide them with suitable advice and interventions;
- Education and awareness of the correct siting and fitting of smoke alarms in people's homes to prevent unnecessary activations and false alarms also continued;
- NWFRS has continued to promote regular testing of smoke alarms using all media platforms;
- Endeavours continued to ensure our advice provided details and actions to be taken if a fire starts or a smoke alarm activates in the home;
- Educationalists continued to promote smoke alarm ownership and testing as part of the delivery across North Wales schools.

7 False Alarms



7.1 In the 2022/23 financial year, there were 2,674 false alarms; a 6.2% increase from 2,517 in the previous financial year. There was a 9.6% increase in AFAs from 1,398 to 1,532. False alarms made with good intent increased slightly, from 1,076 to 1,090.



Category	Year	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Year-to-Date (YTD)	% change YTD	Average of 3 previous years	% change YTD / Average of 3 previous years
Total false alarm	2022-23	671	788	607	608	2,674	↑ 6.2%	2,369	↑ 12.9%
	2021-22	595	702	592	628	2,517			
AFA	2022-23	416	420	360	337	1,532	↑ 9.6%	1,275	↑ 20.2%
	2021-22	311	403	345	339	1,398			
False alarms made with good intent	2022-23	241	353	238	258	1,090	↑ 1.3%	1,052	↑ 3.6%
	2021-22	278	287	235	276	1,076			
Malicious	2022-23	14	15	9	14	52	↑ 20.9%	41	↑ 26.8%
	2021-22	6	12	12	13	43			

*The final two columns show: the average of the 3 previous financial years (based on the equivalent reporting period); the percentage change based on the difference between the current financial year and the 3-year average.

Narrative

- **2,676** Total False Alarms attended (increase of 6.2%);
- **1,532** Total Fire alarm due to apparatus (AFA) (increase of 9.6%);
- Fire alarm due to 'apparatus' represented 57.3% of total False Alarms.

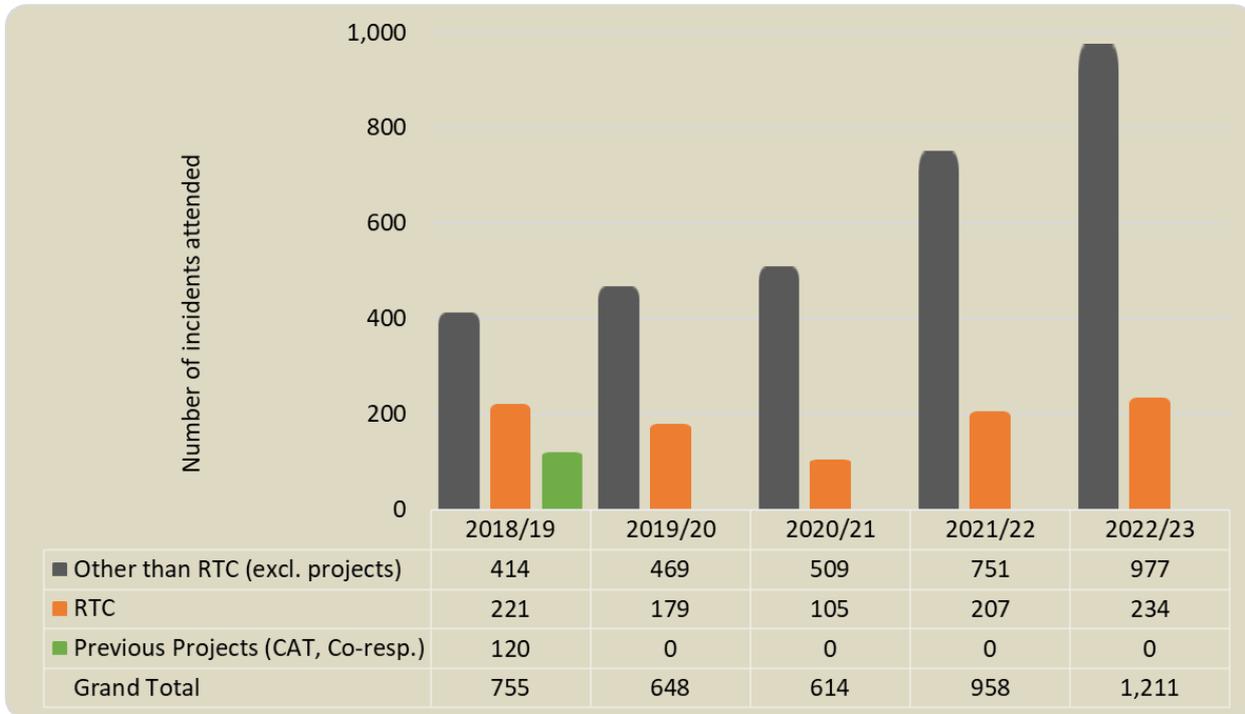
What we have done:

- **AFAs in dwellings** – The Service conducted a targeted approach to fire prevention during the financial year to keep the most vulnerable people safe in our communities, which included working with care providers by installing care line systems (this may increase the number of AFAs we attend in dwellings, but each attendance will give us an opportunity to provide further, often bespoke safety advice). We will continue to monitor AFAs in dwellings next year by:
 - Continuing to review the daily incident log by Partnership Managers in the areas to spot any emerging trends and/or repeat calls to the same premises;
 - Continuing to work with care line providers ensuring call monitoring staff have the appropriate training and review if required e.g. new starters;
 - Continuing to provide safety advice when NWFRS attend AFAs in dwellings;
 - Continuing to make referrals to external agencies when further specialist support is identified and needed.
- **AFAs in non-residential** - We have worked with BCUHB to try and reduce the number of actuations, and support BCUHB's plan to reduce AFAs in the future, which we will continue to monitor during the coming year;
- **AFAs in 'other residential'** - As above, work is ongoing to support BCUHB to reduce AFA activations in care settings. We are also working with higher education establishments to reduce AFAs through targeted Prevention campaigns.

8 Special Service Calls



8.1 Special service calls increased 26.4% to 1,211 during the 2022/23 financial year, compared with 958 in 2021/22. Road traffic collisions increased 13.0% from 207 to 234, whilst 'Other than RTC' incidents increased 30.1%, from 751 to 977. (The rise in SSCs attended was expected following the Service's decision to increase visibility in the community).



Category	Year	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Year-to-Date (YTD)	% change YTD	Average of 3 previous years	% change YTD / Average of 3 previous years
Total special service calls	2022-23	327	371	267	246	1,211	↑ 26.4%	740	↑ 63.6%
	2021-22	152	233	315	258	958			
Road traffic collisions (RTC)	2022-23	53	65	60	56	234	↑ 13.0%	164	↑ 42.7%
	2021-22	31	56	68	52	207			
Other than RTC	2022-23	274	306	207	190	977	↑ 30.1%	576	↑ 69.6%
	2021-22	121	177	247	206	751			

*The final two columns show: the average of the 3 previous financial years (based on the equivalent reporting period); the percentage change based on the difference between the current financial year and the 3-year average.

Narrative

1,211 special service calls attended (26.4% increase);

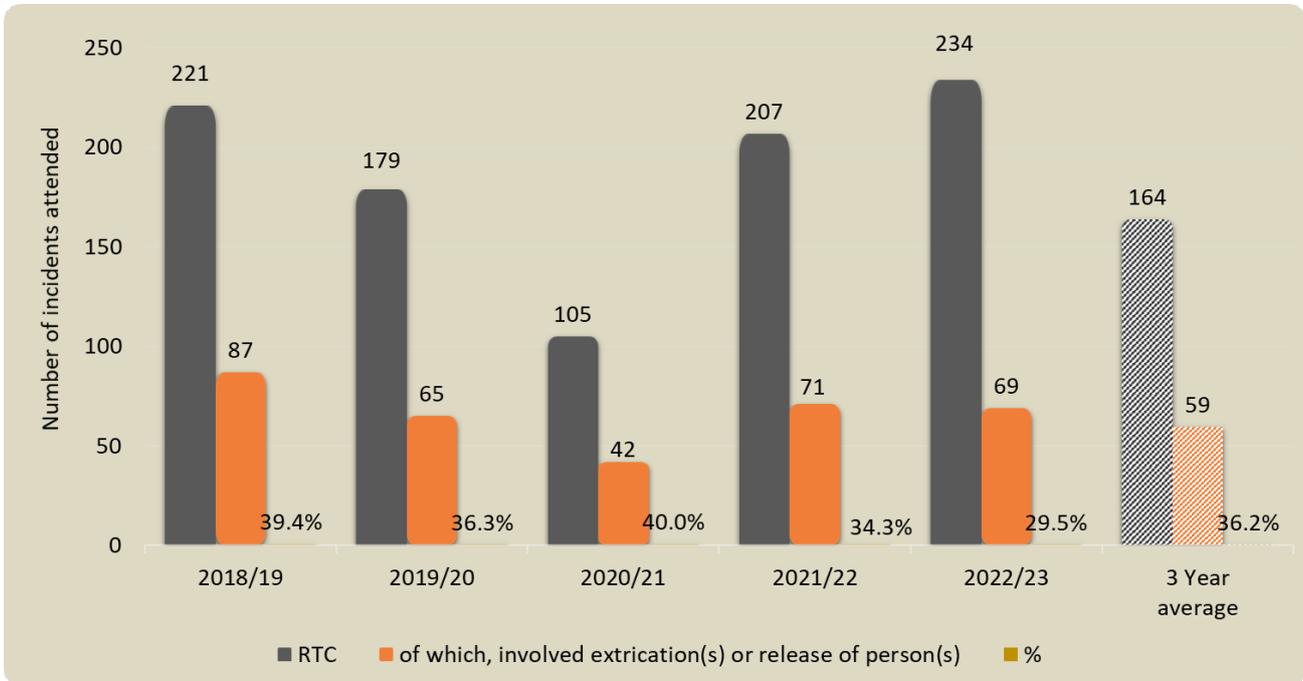
977 Other than RTC (excl. projects) (increase of 30.1%).

- The reason for NWFRS's increased attendance to SSCs is a result of a conscious decision taken by the organisation to change the approach and be more proactive in responding to requests for assistance which would not typically require a Fire and Rescue Service response. This has resulted in being more visible in the community.
- The number of RTCs attended increased to 234 and were higher than the 3-year average of 164. It should be noted that the number of visitors to the area, especially during the summer months, was significant during 2022 (release from all Covid-19 restrictions).
- 'Olivia's Story' continued to be delivered in collaboration with NWP. Over 2,500 young people have now been given the presentation.
- NWFRS is a stakeholder and key participant of the North Wales Road Safety Group, supporting the delivery of interventions where required.

9 Road Traffic Collisions and Extrications/Release



9.1 Out of the 234 road traffic collisions attended in the 2022/23 financial year, 69 (29.6%) involved the Service using equipment to extricate at least one casualty from the vehicle. Whilst 129 incidents resulted in injuries, the majority of casualties sustained only slight injuries.



234	RTC incidents attended
129	incidents where people sustained injury
69	incidents involved extrication / release

Severity of Injury *	Number of people
Precautionary check	49
First Aid	31
Injuries - Slight	87
Injuries - Serious	58
Fatalities	9

*RTC injuries - where available are recorded in the IRS in the same categorisation as fire injuries

Narrative

234 RTCs attended, a 13.0% increase from 207;
69 (29.6%) involved extrication / release of persons.

Despite the increase in RTCs attended, there was a reduction in the percentage of extrications required by NWFRS crews. The increase in visitor numbers (road traffic) in North Wales during the summer of 2022 was the likely reason for the increase of RTCs.

Action taken to reduce the number of road traffic collision:

- 'Olivia's Story' was delivered in collaboration with NWP. Over 2,500 young people have now been given the presentation;
- NWFRS Prevention staff continued to attend the North Wales Road Safety Group;
- NWFRS, in partnership with WAST and NWP, remains part of the 'Deadly Impacts' intervention that details the consequences of a road traffic collision (RTC) (death and serious injuries).

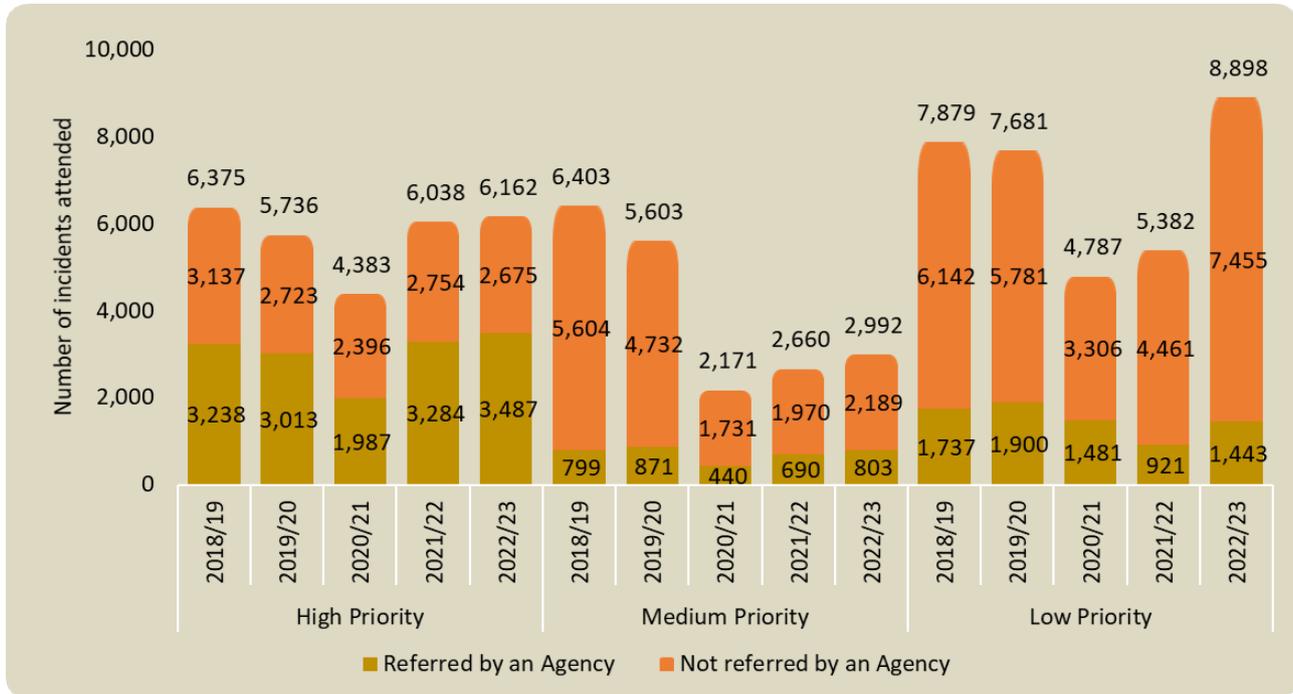
10 Monitoring against Improvement and Well-being objective 1:



1.1 To support people to prevent accidental dwelling fires and stay safe if they do occur.

10.1 Safe and Well Checks

The Service completed 18,052 Safe and Well Checks during 2022/23, of which 5,733 (31.8%) were undertaken in response to a referral from a partner agency.



Category	Year	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Year-to-Date (YTD)	Change YTD	Average of 3 previous years	Change YTD / Average of 3 previous years
% of all Safe and Well Checks undertaken that originated from a referral from a partner organisation	2022-23	35.2%	30.2%	31.7%	30.1%	31.8%	↓ 8.4%	32.9%	↓ 3.3%
	2021-22	39.5%	34.5%	34.6%	32.1%	34.7%			

*The final two columns show: the average of the 3 previous financial years (based on the equivalent reporting period); the percentage change based on the difference between the current financial year and the 3-year average.

Narrative

18,052 SAWCs completed of which: -

6,162 (34.1%) referrals were high priority, with 3,487 coming from a partner agency;

2,992 (16.6%) were Medium Priority SAWCs;

8,898 (49.3%) were Low Priority SAWCs.

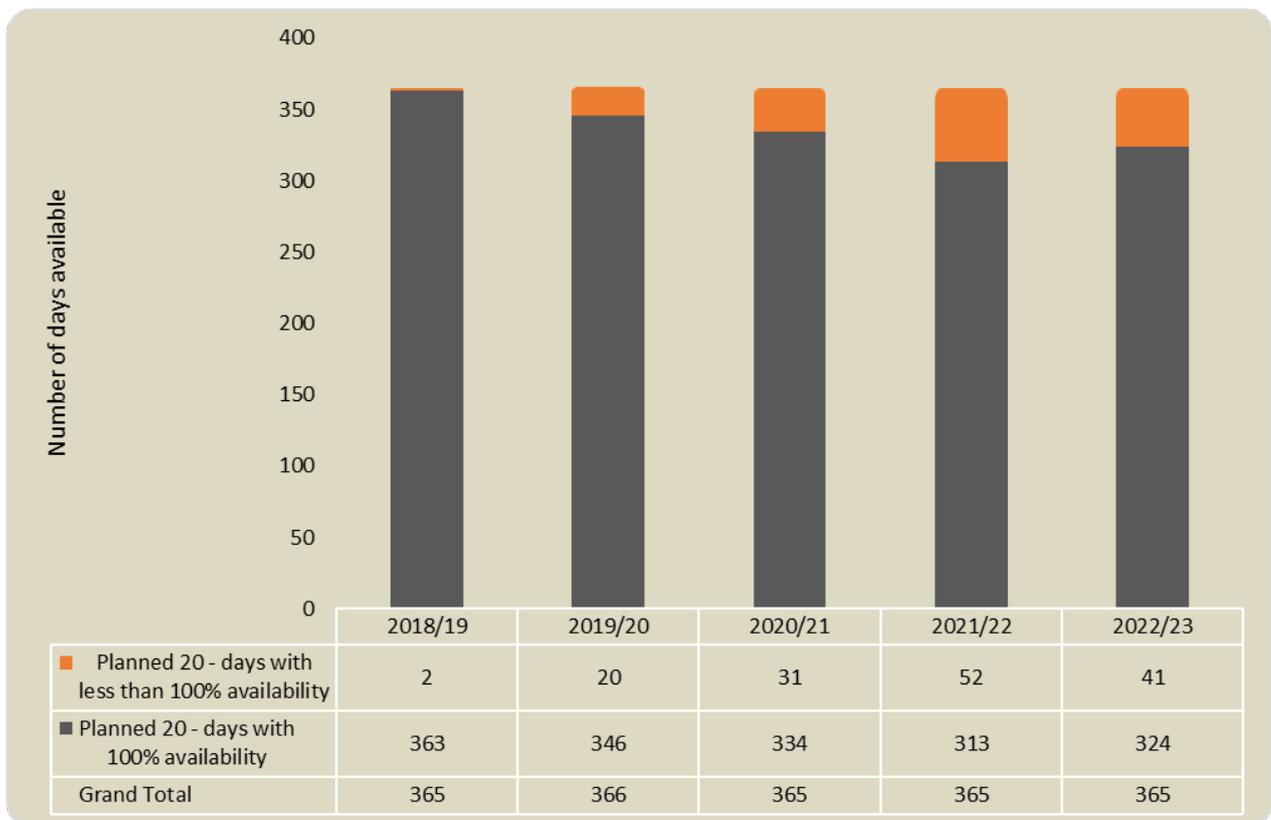
Action taken to improve performance & comments:

- The target of 20,000 SAWCs was not achieved. However, given the unprecedented financial pressures the Service now finds itself under, the Fire Safety department has seen a reduction of 2.5 Home Safety Support Worker (HSSW) posts (approved 16th January 2023 FA meeting), a long term HSSW vacant post not filled, and some periods of sickness absence. These have unfortunately had a negative impact;
- There was a return to pre Covid-19 SAWC activity following positive re-engagement work with our partner agencies;
- SAWCs were delivered as previously referred to in the report, including via telephone, where appropriate;
- Prevention campaigns and safety advice in line with our CSG and Corporate Communications campaign calendar continued;
- Re-engagement of the previous High priority project continued and involved all WT, DC, and WDSR crews;
- Bespoke interventions continued to be provided to the most vulnerable in the community;
- The array of interventions issued to occupiers continued to grow, including innovative equipment such as Stoveguards;
- SAWC targets to increase for all Day Crewed and Wholetime watches (12 to 15/shift) from 1st April 2023.

11 Planned 20 Stations Availability

11.1 NWFRS has 44 fire stations with 54 response pumps, as 8 stations have 2 pumps and Wrexham has 3. Pre-planning takes place each day to deploy resources to ensure 20 are made available between 0600 and 1800. Short notice changes can sometimes result in a reduction that cannot be immediately rectified.

During 2022/23, the number of times the threshold of 20 was met increased 3.5% to 324 days (88.8%) compared with 313 days (85.8%) in 2021/22. From 1st April 2023, the Fire Authority has agreed the minimum will be 18.



Glossary

Fires	All fires fall into one of three categories – primary, secondary or chimney.
Primary Fires	These are fires that are not chimney fires, and which are in any type of building (except if derelict), vehicles, caravans and trailers, outdoor storage, plant and machinery, agricultural and forestry property, and other outdoor structures such as bridges, post boxes, tunnels, etc. Fires in any location are categorised as primary fires if they involved casualties, rescues or escapes, as are fires in any location that were attended by five or more fire appliances.
Secondary Fires	Secondary fires are fires that are neither chimney fires nor primary fires. Secondary fires do not involve casualties, rescues or escapes, and will have been attended by four or fewer fire appliances. Secondary fires are those that would normally occur in locations such as open land, in single trees, fences, telegraph poles, refuse and refuse containers (but not paper banks, which would be considered - in the same way as agricultural and forestry property - to be primary fires), outdoor furniture, traffic lights, etc.
Chimney Fires	These are fires in occupied buildings where the fire is confined within the chimney structure, even if heat or smoke damage extends beyond the chimney itself. Chimney fires do not involve casualties, rescues or escapes, and will have been attended by four or fewer fire appliances.
Special Service Incidents	These are non-fire incidents which require the attendance of an appliance or officer and include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Local emergencies e.g., flooding, road traffic incidents, rescue of persons, 'making safe' etc; b) Major disasters; c) Domestic incidents e.g., water leaks, persons locked in or out etc; d) Prior arrangements to attend incidents, which may include some provision of advice and inspections.
False Alarm (general guidance)	Where the FRS attends a location believing there to be an incident, but on arrival discovers that no such incident exists, or existed. Note: if the appliance is 'turned around' by Control before arriving at the incident it is not classed as having been attended and does not need to be reported.
False Alarms - Malicious	These are calls made with the intention of getting the FRS to attend a non-existent incident, including deliberate and suspected malicious intentions.
False Alarms – Good Intent	These are calls made in good faith in the belief that the FRS really would attend a fire or special service incident.
False Alarms - AFA	These are calls initiated by fire alarm and fire-fighting equipment. They include accidental initiation of alarm apparatus or where an alarm operates and a person then routinely calls the FRS as part of a standing arrangement, i.e., with no 'judgement' involved, for example from a security call centre or a nominated person in an organisation.

Building - Dwellings	A property that is a place of residence, i.e., occupied by households, excluding hotels, hostel and residential non-permanent structures.
Building - Non-Residential	Properties such as hospitals, offices, shops, factories, warehouses, restaurants, cinemas, public buildings, religious buildings, agricultural buildings, railway stations, sheds, prisons.
Building - Other Residential	Properties such as hotels, hotels and residential institutions B&Bs, Nursing/care homes, student halls of residence.
Vehicle (Road and Other Transport)	Road vehicle, rail vehicle, aircraft, boat.
Outdoor	Fields, grassland, woodland, refuse containers, post boxes.
Wildfires	A grassland, woodland and crop fire where the incident was attended by 4 or more vehicles, or the Service was in attendance for 6 hours or more, or where there was an estimated fire damage area of over 10,000 square meters.