

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 14 MARCH 2022 virtually via Zoom.

The meeting will start at 9.30am.

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 20 December 2021 and Extraordinary minutes of meetings held on 14 February 2022 and 25 October 2021**
- 5. Matters Arising**
- 6. Covid update (verbal)**
- 7. Appointment and promotion process to the new structure**
- 8. Chair's Report (verbal)**
- 9. Annual Review of the Authority's Corporate Plan 2021-24**
- 10. Capital Strategy 2022/23 – 2024/25**
- 11. Provisional Outturn 2021/22**
- 12. Pay Policy Statement 2022/23**
- 13. The Standards Committee's Annual Report**

14. The Inclusive Fire Service Group (IFSG)

15. Financial Regulations

16. Temporary Delegation of Powers before the Annual Meeting


17. 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.

18. None.

Report to	North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority	
Date	14 March 2022	
Lead Officer	Dawn Docx, Chief Fire Officer	
Contact Officer	Dawn Docx 01745 535254	
Subject	Appointment and promotion process to the new structure	

PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1 This report provides the Fire and Rescue Authority with an update with regards to the resolution of the internal recruitment and promotion issues and the implementation of a new structure.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 2 Over the last 9 months a new "Internal Recruitment and Promotion" process has been devised and agreed with the representative bodies. It has been tested and then used to appoint to the many vacant operational manager posts within North Wales Fire and Rescue Service.
- 3 At the same time a revised internal structure has been created and consulted upon. The structure seeks to address the need for visible leadership, closer connection and support for stations. These issues were highlighted in the Chief Fire Officer's Situational Assessment and via feedback from the independent Staff Survey carried out in October and November 2021.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4 Members are requested to note the new structure and progress made to resolve the internal recruitment and promotion issues.

OBSERVATIONS FROM THE EXECUTIVE PANEL/AUDIT COMMITTEE

- 5 This paper has not previously been considered by either the Executive Panel or Audit Committee.

BACKGROUND

- 6 Members will recall that in 2021 a number of cultural concerns surfaced within North Wales Fire and Rescue Service (NWFRS) which attracted some public attention. The previous Chief Fire Officer met with representative bodies and employees to understand these concerns, the solution to which, was then handed on to the incoming Chief Fire Officer and her new team to devise.

- 7 Primarily these concerns revolved around dissatisfaction with the high proportion of employees who had been undertaking roles in a temporary capacity. Some of these people had been in these roles for a number of years. In addition, if these roles were not to be filled permanently, then other employees expressed the desire to have the opportunity to be temporarily promoted into these roles to broaden their experience.
- 8 Because of delays due to Covid two of the five posts within the Principal Management Team had been temporary for four years and all of the Area Managers were temporary in post.
- 9 In addition, concern was expressed by employees and their representative bodies that the existing promotion and temporary promotion system was no longer fit for purpose and it needed to be revised.
- 10 Some employees believed that they did not have “a voice” and there was criticism from Audit Wales that there was little evidence of co-creation and consultation within NWFRS.

INFORMATION

- 11 The appointment of a new Chief Fire Officer provided the opportunity to start to address these issues. In her first 100 days she met with key stakeholders and employees within departments, the control function and on stations. At the same time a revised Recruitment and Internal Promotion process was devised and agreed with the Fire Brigades Union. The philosophy behind the new process was that it should be transparent and that the decision making should be devolved to the level closest to the line manager of each role. The process would seek to assess those people suitable for promotion once vacancies arose (green category), those suitable for temporary promotion (amber category) and those which required more support to achieve the required standard (red category).
- 12 All Crew and Watch Managers vacancies on wholetime stations, which did not form part of a chain of promotions, were appointed to in September 2021. 1 Station Manager and 6 Watch Manager vacancies in the control room were also appointed to in September 2021.
- 13 In order to unlock the remaining chains, the Chief Fire Officer presented her Situational Assessment to the Fire and Rescue Authority on 20 September 2021 and received an endorsement to recruit to the vacant Principal Management Team posts. Planning to fill the Deputy Chief Fire Officer and Assistant Chief Fire Officer posts began immediately and following a vigorous assessment, which cumulated in a members' appointments panel. The full Fire and Rescue Authority approved the two appointments at its meeting on 20 December 2021.

- 14 The process to fill the four vacant Area Manger posts was completed in January 2022. It was pleasing to see that in addition to strong applications from internal candidates there were also applications from external candidates with connections to North Wales.
- 15 The extra ordinary Fire and Rescue Authority on 14 February 2022 approved the appointment of the Assistant Chief Officer, as well as the contracts for the roles of Clerk and Treasurer to the Authority.
- 16 In February all the Group Manager posts and Station Manager posts were filled which will enable the remaining Watch Managers and Crew Managers posts to be appointed to by the end of March 2022. The aim was to be able to confirm to each employee their permanent role within a new structure before the beginning of April 2022.
- 17 A new structure was devised with the aim of providing more local support to staff on fire stations and providing extra capacity to undertake more locally based work to improve recruitment, availability, station based training and operational assurance. The new structure reduces the size of central departments and sees a return to West, East and Central areas (Appendix 1).
- 18 A sign of the change in leadership approach was that this proposed structure was presented to employees at face to face and online meetings and a formal consultation period of four weeks was provided in January 2022. 55 responses were received and considered by the Service Leadership Team, with feedback to all the consultees being provided in person. The majority of the responses were supportive of the concepts and some minor changes were made as a result of staff suggestions.
- 19 Another example of staff consultation was that as part of the promotion process employees were asked to state to which posts they would prefer to be appointed. Although it is impossible to please everyone, this has formed the basis of the allocation of posts. This has provided the opportunity for many managers within the Service to work closer to their homes and thus reducing their commutes, which is better for their family life and the environment. It has also resulted in a greater number of fluent Welsh speakers working within the Western area, which should enhance communication with their local communities.
- 20 Finally, the Chief Fire Officer would like to thank employees working within the Human Resources and Training departments and the Officers, at every level, who undertook the training and carried out all the assessments and interviews. They should be congratulated for being able to undertake the work and resolve these cultural issues within such short timescales.

- 21 Work continues to appoint to all Watch and Crew Manager vacancies on On-call stations.

IMPLICATIONS

Well-being Objectives	<p>Supports objective 4: Continue to identify opportunities to encourage greater engagement with people, communities, staff and stakeholders</p> <p>Supports objective 5: Maintain a suitably resilient, skilled, professional and flexible workforce</p>
Budget	The cost of the revised structure was included within the revenue budget allocation for 2022/23
Legal	Concerns around promotional processes and temporary arrangements have now been addressed
Staffing	All full-time operational managers posts are now appointed to on a permanent basis.
Equalities/Human Rights/Welsh Language	<p>The vast majority of the managers appointed to the West area have welsh language skills which will enable better communication and connection with local communities.</p> <p>Managers have had the opportunity to express their preference for role and location.</p>
Risks	A number of employees will choose to retire this year which will create new vacancies. The promotion process has already identified managers suitable for temporary promotion. This will only be for a period of six months and the posts will be filled on a permanent basis through next year's promotion board.

North Wales Fire and Rescue Service Operational Officer Structure

(1st April 2022)

Head of Operations and Eastern Area (AM)

Operations



**Technical Operations
Manager (GM)**

**Partnerships & Communities
Manager (GM)**

**Operations & Training
Manager (GM)**

Technical Support
Manager (SM)

Operational
Guidance
Manager (SM)

Health and Safety
Manager (SM)

Compliance
Manager (SM)

Recruitment &
Availability
Manager (SM)

Training Manager
(SM⁴²)

Operational
Preparedness
Manager (SM)

Operational
Assurance
Manager (SM)

Technical Support
Officer x4 (WM)

Fire Safety Watch
Manager (WM)

Recruitment &
Availability Watch
Manager (WM)



Head of Control, ICT and Central Area (AM)

Control

ICT



**Fire Service Control
Manager (GM)**

ICT Manager (GM)

**Partnerships & Communities
Manager (GM)**

**Operations & Training
Manager (GM)**

**Control Management
Team x 4 (SM)**

**Compliance
Manager (SM)**

**Recruitment &
Availability
Manager (SM)**

**Training Manager
(SM)**

**Operational
Preparedness
Manager (SM)**

**Operational
Assurance
Manager (SM)**

**Control Watch
Manager x 8 (WM)**

**Fire Safety Watch
Manager (WM)**

**Recruitment &
Availability Watch
Manager (WM)**

Head of Fire Safety and Western Area (AM)

Fire Safety



**Prevention and Protection
Manager (GM)**

**Partnerships & Communities
Manager (GM)**

**Operations & Training
Manager (GM)**

**Business Fire Safety
Manager (SM)**

**Community Safety
and Arson Reduction
Manager (SM)**

**Compliance
Manager (SM)**

**Recruitment &
Availability
Manager (SM)**

**Training Manager
(SM)**

**Operational
Preparedness
Manager (SM)**

**Operational
Assurance
Manager (SM)**

**Fire Safety Watch
Manager (WM)**

**Fire Safety Watch
Manager (WM)**

**Recruitment &
Availability Watch
Manager (WM)**

Head of Training (AM)

Professional & Organisational Development

Professional & Organisational Development Manager (GM)

Accredited Centre Manager (SM42)

People Development Manager (SM42)

Training Programme Development Manager (SM)

Accredited Centre Coordinator (WM)

Operational Trainers Programme Development x 2 (WM)

Operational Training Delivery


Training Delivery Manager (GM)

Training Programme Delivery Manager (SM)

Incident Command & Driving School Manager (SM)

Operational Trainers x 10 (WM)

Operational Trainers Incident Command x 2 (WM)

Report to	North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority	
Date	14 March 2022	
Lead Officer	Shân Morris, Assistant Chief Officer (Corporate Policy and Planning)	
Contact Officer	Pippa Hardwick, Head of Corporate Planning	
Subject	Annual Review of the Authority's Corporate Plan 2021-24	

PURPOSE OF REPORT

1. To present for approval the 2022/23 revision of the Authority's Corporate Plan 2021-24.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

2. Every March the Authority publishes a plan for the following financial year that confirms its improvement and well-being objectives and explains what it intends to do during that year to move the Authority closer to achieving them.
3. In March 2021 the Authority published a Corporate Plan 2021-24 in which it set out its seven long-term improvement and well-being objectives and the actions that it proposed to take in 2021/22.
4. In October 2021 Members confirmed their intention to continue to pursue those same objectives in 2022/23.
5. In November 2021 Members reflected on some key challenges that had been highlighted through the new Chief Fire Officer's situational assessment, and the consequences for the Authority's budget. The revenue budget subsequently approved in December 2021 included an increase of £1.3m to address those challenges.
6. Officers have been finalising their costed departmental plans for 2022/23 to reflect the Authority's long-term objectives and identified key challenges in addition to other improvement and risk reduction activity.

RECOMMENDATION

7. That Members approve the revision of the Corporate Plan 2021-24 for publication on the Authority's website before the end of March 2022.

BACKGROUND

8. Fire and Rescue Authorities in Wales are required to publish improvement objectives in accordance with the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2009, and well-being objectives in compliance with the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015. For the purposes of the Authority's planning processes these are treated as one and the same.
9. The Well-being of Future Generations Act places a duty on the Authority to carry out sustainable development, which must include:
 - a) setting and publishing well-being objectives that are designed to maximise its contribution to achieving each of the well-being goals set for the whole of Wales; and
 - b) taking all reasonable steps (in exercising its functions) to meet those objectives.
10. The relevant legislation does not stipulate how often the Authority must change its objectives, but there is a requirement to review them at least once a year and consider to what extent:
 - the objectives contribute to achieving the well-being goals for Wales;
 - the objectives are consistent with the sustainable development principle – i.e. that they help to ensure that the needs of the present are met without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs; and
 - the Authority is taking all reasonable steps to meet its objectives.
11. In the normal run of the planning cycle, the Authority confirms existing or drafts new objectives during the autumn/winter, and agrees its budget at its December meeting. It subsequently publishes a new or revised plan at its March meeting detailing what actions it proposes to take in the following financial year in pursuit of its long-term objectives.
12. In March 2020 the Authority published seven long-term well-being objectives in its Improvement and Well-being Plan 2020/21. Members resolved in March 2021 to carry these same objectives forward into its Corporate Plan for 2021-24. The objectives are:
 - **Objective 1:** To work towards making improvements to the health, safety and well-being of people in North Wales.
 - **Objective 2:** To continue to work collaboratively to help communities improve their resilience.
 - **Objective 3:** To operate as effectively and efficiently as possible, making the best use of the resources available.

- **Objective 4:** To continue to identify opportunities to encourage greater engagement with people, communities, staff and stakeholders.
- **Objective 5:** To maintain a suitably resilient, skilled, professional and flexible workforce.
- **Objective 6:** To develop ways of becoming more environmentally conscious in order to minimise the impact of our activity on the environment.
- **Objective 7:** To ensure that social value and sustainability are considered, including during procurement processes.

INFORMATION

13. Although the Authority's long-term objectives remain unchanged, the steps that need to be taken towards achieving them are necessarily going to be different every year.
14. Some planned actions can be achieved within a single year whilst others may need to be adjusted and carried over into subsequent years' plans. Similarly, new planned actions will need to reflect the prevailing situation but without losing sight of the longer-term objectives.
15. Work undertaken since the new Chief Fire Officer took up her post on 1 July 2021 clarified some key challenges for the Authority as it moves into the 2022/23 financial year. These relate to:
 - maintaining enough availability of on-call fire crews;
 - ensuring enough resources to maintain and develop firefighter skills; and
 - having sufficient corporate capacity to meet current and future demand.

The Authority's revenue budget for 2022/23, approved in December 2021, includes an additional £1.3m to address these challenges.
16. Also, recent Audit Wales reports have highlighted improvements for the Authority to consider, including:
 - adopting a more integrated strategic approach to involving others outside the Service in co-producing and shaping the services that it provides;
 - reviewing the effectiveness of its governance arrangements in relation to scrutiny, accountability and focusing on key risks;
 - succession planning within the Service;
 - challenging its assumptions on fire station locations to make sure that the Authority remains resilient and is well placed to take on wider responsibilities in future; and


- developing a carbon baseline along with a plan for carbon reduction to achieve carbon zero status by the Welsh Government's target date of 2030.

17. The Authority's 2022/23 annual review of its 2021-24 Corporate Plan therefore:

- confirms the Authority's long-term improvement and well-being objectives;
- outlines what actions are planned to be achieved or progressed by the Service in 2022/23;
- reflects the key challenges facing the Authority, including the three that were clarified through the Chief Fire Officer's situational assessment;
- takes account of Audit Wales's findings and recommendations;
- considers the ongoing work of the Public Services Boards especially where objectives align with the Authority's own plans;
- ensures preparedness for any future amendments arising from an updated National Framework and any additional recommendations from the Well-being of Future Generations Commissioners office; and
- aligns with the Authority's revenue budget, capital plan and medium-term financial plan.

IMPLICATIONS

Well-being Objectives	The Plan confirms the Authority's long-term well-being objectives and explains what it proposes to do towards achieving them.
Budget	The Authority's agreed capital and revenue budgets 2022/23 reflect the steps that will be taken during that year towards achieving the Authority's Well-Being Objectives.
Legal	Supports compliance with improvement planning and well-being legislation.
Staffing	No known impact on staffing levels at this time.
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.

Report to	North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority	
Date	14 March 2022	
Lead Officer	Helen MacArthur – Assistant Chief Fire Officer	
Contact Officer	Graham Williams (01745 535286)	
Subject	Capital Strategy 2022/23 – 2024/25	

PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1 The purpose of this report is to present to members the Capital Strategy (the Strategy) for the period April 2022 – March 2025.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 2 The Strategy provides an overview of the planned future capital expenditure, capital financing and treasury management activity necessary to achieve the objectives of the North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority (the Authority). The Strategy also provides assurances on how associated risk is managed and the implications for future financial sustainability. It summarises the overall processes and procedures that govern the purchase and financing of assets in order to enhance members' understanding of these sometimes technical areas. The report also includes the Prudential Indicators and Treasury Strategies that need approval by the Fire and Rescue Authority.
- 3 The Strategy has been developed following the approval of the revenue and capital budgets for 2022/23, which confirmed a net revenue budget of £39.41m with a further £2.916m approved for capital expenditure.

OBSERVATIONS FROM THE AUDIT COMMITTEE

- 4 This report was presented to the Audit Committee on 24 January. The Audit Committee is tasked with ensuring effective scrutiny of the treasury management strategy and policies and based on its findings make recommendations to the Fire and Rescue Authority. Members of the Audit Committee recommended the report for approval by the Fire and Rescue Authority.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- 5 That Members approve the Capital Strategy which incorporates the minimum revenue provision policy, treasury management strategy and prudential indicators.

INFORMATION

- 5 The strategies in the report have been prepared using guidance from the Treasury Management advisors, Arlingclose, used by Conwy County Borough Council who has the responsibility for the Fire Service Treasury function.

IMPLICATIONS

Wellbeing Objectives	This report links to the Authority's long-term well-being objectives, by ensuring that the purchase of assets to support front line service delivery is prudent, affordable and sustainable. The Capital Strategy is designed to ensure that there is sufficient investment in infrastructure to enable the service to provide emergency responses and prevention work well in to the future.
Budget	The Capital Strategy is linked to the revenue and capital budget setting which considers longer term affordability
Legal	The regulatory framework is set out in the appendices to the report.
Staffing	None
Equalities/Human Rights/Welsh Language	None
Risks	The reports sets out the financial risks associated with borrowing and investment activities.

CAPITAL STRATEGY

This document sets out the Capital Strategy (the Strategy) for North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority (the Authority) for the financial years 2022/23 through to 2024/25.

The report provides a high-level overview of capital expenditure, capital financing and treasury management activity.

1.0 Capital Expenditure Plans

Capital expenditure is where the Authority spends money on assets which will be used over a period exceeding one year. This will include amounts spent on buying assets such as property, vehicles or equipment but may also include expenditure on upgrading existing assets. The underlying assets are generally owned by the Authority but capital expenditure may also be incurred on assets owned by other bodies or relate to loans or grants issued to other bodies to enable them to buy assets.

The Authority follows the CIPFA Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting which includes some limited discretion on what counts as capital expenditure. For example, assets costing below £5,000 are not capitalised and are charged directly to the revenue account in the year that the expenditure is incurred. The Authority's Financial Regulations contain the key controls and confirm that all expenditure must be in accordance with the Authority's Contract Procedure Rules.

The details of the Authority's policy on capitalisation and the treatment of assets for accounting purposes is included as an appendix to the Statement of Accounts under 'Statement of Accounting Policies'. The accounts are published on the Fire Service website every year - <https://www.northwalesfire.gov.wales>

The Authority's Medium Term Financial Strategy recognises the need for continued investment in buildings, vehicles, ICT assets and equipment to ensure that the Authority is able to achieve its stated objectives. Governance arrangements are in place to ensure that all expenditure is aligned to the corporate priorities which are set out in the Authority's Improvement and Well-being Plan.

The capital expenditure detailed below forms part of the Authority's Medium Term Financial Strategy and was approved by the Fire and Rescue Authority in December 2021. Since the approval further work has been completed in relation to the capital plan for 2023/24 and 2024/25 to ensure the plan continues to be affordable. The revised capital expenditure is detailed below.

	2020/21 Actual £'000	2021/22 Revised £'000	2022/23 Estimate £'000	2023/24 Estimate £'000	2024/25 Estimate £'000
Capital expenditure	0	1,027	2,916	3,620	3,630

2.0 Borrowing Need: Capital Financing Requirement (CFR)

The CFR is simply the total historic outstanding capital expenditure which has not yet been paid for from either revenue or capital resources. It is essentially a measure of the Authority's indebtedness and so its underlying borrowing need. This increases when further expenditure is funded by borrowing and reduces when debt is repaid using capital receipts and Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP).

As part of the process for establishing the capital expenditure plans, it is important that the Authority considers how such expenditure will be financed and the affordability of these decisions over the lifetime of the asset. Capital expenditure may be financed from internal sources such as revenue budgets, capital receipts or usable reserves or from external sources such as borrowing, leasing or grants.

Borrowing is only a temporary source of finance and must be repaid during the lifetime of the asset. A financing charge is made to the Authority's revenue accounts each year which is known as the minimum revenue provision (MRP).

When a capital asset is no longer needed, it may be sold so that the proceeds, known as capital receipts, can be spent on new assets or to repay debt.

The Authority's Capital Financing Requirement (CFR) is set out in the table below:

	2020/21 Actual £'000	2021/22 Revised £'000	2022/23 Estimate £'000	2023/24 Estimate £'000	2024/25 Estimate £'000
Opening CFR	31,744	29,385	28,411	29,389	30,943
Closing CFR	29,385	28,411	29,389	30,943	32,469
Movement in CFR	(2,359)	(974)	978	1,554	1,526

Movement in CFR represented by:

Net financing need for the year (Capital expenditure)	0	1,027	2,916	3,621	3,630
Less MRP/VRP	(2,105)	(2,001)	(1,938)	(2,067)	(2,104)
Prior Year Adjustment	(254)	0	0	0	0
Movement in CFR	(2,359)	(974)	978	1,554	1,526

From the 2022/23 financial year the way leases are accounted for is changing under IFRS16. This will possibly result in some expenditure on leases being classed as capital expenditure. If this has any impact on the above CFR figures, revised indicators will be submitted at a later date.

3.0 Revenue Budget Implications of Capital Decisions

Capital expenditure is not charged directly to the revenue budget. Instead an annual charge is made to the revenue account for using the capital assets. This charge to revenue reflects the repayment of a proportion of the borrowing incurred to buy the underlying capital assets. The charge to revenue is known as the minimum revenue provision (MRP) and forms part of the capital financing charge. The capital financing charge also includes the interest cost of borrowing but may be offset by any receivable investment income.

The Local Government Act 2003 does not specify how the MRP should be calculated but the Authority must consider the Welsh Government guidance which was issued in 2018. The broad aim of the guidance is to ensure that over the life of the asset the charges made to the Authority's revenue account reflect the underlying costs and finance charges. Thus the full cost of capital decisions will be reflected in the Authority's revenue position.

The Authority's MRP Policy is set out below which is consistent with the Welsh Government guidance and reflected in the Medium Term Financial Strategy approved in December 2021:

- The MRP will be calculated by charging the expenditure over the expected useful life of the asset as determined by the Authority's Financial Accounting Policies. The charge will be made in equal instalments and commence in the year after the asset became operational.

The revenue impact of the capital investment plans are outlined below

	2020/21 actual (£'000)	2021/22 forecast (£'000)	2022/23 estimate (£'000)	2023/24 estimate (£'000)	2024/25 estimate (£'000)
Minimum Revenue Position	2,104	2,000	1,938	2,067	2,104
Financing costs	380	324	325	375	375
Total charge to revenue	2,484	2,324	2,263	2,442	2,479

4.0 Affordability and Sustainability of Capital Plans

Due to the long-term nature of capital assets, the decisions made in relation to capital expenditure will have a revenue consequence for a number of years. The actual number of years is dependent on the type of asset although in respect of buildings this may extend to 50 years. Therefore, the capital planning process must have due regard for the longer term affordability and sustainability of capital expenditure and financing decisions.

The Financial Regulations include controls to ensure that all proposals are subject to appropriate scrutiny and approval. In addition, the Authority has adopted affordability indicators to provide insight into the impact of capital investment plans on the Authority's overall revenue position

The core measure is the actual and estimated financing costs as a percentage of all of the Authority's revenue costs. This identifies the trend in the cost of capital (borrowing and other long term obligation costs) against the expected revenue streams within the medium term financial plans.

	2020/21 Actual %	2021/22 Revised %	2022/23 Estimate %	2023/24 Estimate %	2024/25 Estimate %
Ratio	6.9%	6.3%	5.7%	6.0%	5.9%

5.0 Treasury Management Strategy

The Authority's treasury management arrangements are a key component of the capital strategy and reflect the management of cash flows for both revenue and capital expenditure requirements.

The Authority's treasury activities are strictly regulated by statutory requirements and a professional code of practice (the CIPFA Code of Practice on Treasury Management). The Code requires that the Treasury Management Strategy is reported to the Authority on an annual basis. The Treasury Management Strategy sets out how the Authority will meet the funding requirements established within the capital expenditure plans.

A key requirement of the strategy is to explain both the risks, and the management of the risks, associated with treasury activities and set out the Authority's risk appetite and control measures.

6.0 Borrowing Strategy 2022/23

The main objectives when borrowing are to achieve low rates, reduce risks and maintain flexibility. These objectives are often conflicting, and it is necessary to achieve a balance between cheap short-term loans (currently available at around 0.15%) and long-term fixed rate loans where the future cost is known but higher (currently 1.4% for 5 years to 1.85% for 20 years).

The Treasurer, under delegated powers, will take the most appropriate form of borrowing depending on the prevailing interest rates at the time, taking into account any risks and in accordance with the following controls.

Statutory guidance is that debt should remain below the capital financing requirement, except in the short-term. As can be seen from the table below, the Authority expects to comply with this in the medium term.

The Authority is currently maintaining an under-borrowed position. This means that the capital borrowing need (the Capital Financing Requirement), has not been fully funded with loan debt, as cash supporting the Authority's reserves, balances and cash flow has been used as a temporary measure. This strategy has been prudent as investment returns have been low.

Level of Debt	2021/22 Revised £000	2022/23 Estimate £000	2023/24 Estimate £000	2024/25 Estimate £000
CFR	29,385	29,389	30,943	32,469
Borrowings	22,918	23,895	25,449	26,975

Affordable Borrowing Limit

It is important that the Authority sets limits to ensure that the borrowing is carefully managed and this is achieved through two key indicators:

- **The Operational Boundary** – this indicator is based on the probable external debt during the course of the year; it is not a limit. Actual external debt could vary around this boundary for short times during the year. It should act as a monitoring indicator to ensure the authorised limit is not breached.
- **The Authorised Limit** – this represents a limit beyond which external debt is prohibited, and this limit needs to be set or revised by the Authority. It reflects the level of external debt which, while not desired, could be afforded in the short term, but is not sustainable in the longer term. This is the statutory limit determined under section 3 (1) of the Local Government Act 2003.

The following limits are in place for the periods 2022/2025:

	2021/22 Revised £'000	2022/23 Estimate £'000	2023/24 Estimate £'000	2024/25 Estimate £'000
Operational Boundary	29,385	29,389	30,943	32,469
Authorised Limit	31,385	31,389	32,943	34,469

Economic Background

The ongoing impact on the UK from coronavirus, together with higher inflation, higher interest rates, and the country's trade position post-Brexit, will be major influences on the Authority's treasury management strategy for 2022/23.

The Bank of England (BoE) increased Bank Rate to 0.25% in December 2021. The Authority's treasury management adviser Arlingclose is forecasting that Bank Rate will continue to rise in calendar Q1 2022 (rise to 0.50%) to subdue inflationary pressures and the perceived desire by the BoE to move away from emergency levels of interest rates.

Yields are expected to remain broadly at current levels over the medium-term, with the 5, 10 and 20 year gilt yields expected to average around 0.65%, 0.90%, and 1.15% respectively.

7.0 Investment Strategy

When cash balances are higher than expected cash outflows, the Authority is able to invest surplus cash. These investments are short term in nature and incidental to the Authority's core business. Therefore, all investment decisions should aim to reduce risk rather than maximise returns and liquidity is a priority.

The Authority's investment strategy primarily seeks to safeguard the principal invested and ensure that it is available in a timely manner when required. The investment returns are a secondary consideration.

Current investments are detailed below:

	2021/22 Revised £'000	2022/23 Estimated £'000	2023/24 Estimated £'000	2024/25 Estimated £'000
Total Investments	825	0	0	0

The Treasurer will maintain a list of all the financial institutions which the service can utilise for investing funds. The counterparty list will be subject to the following criteria:

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.	£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 £1billion or more.	£2m/ 9 months

8.0 Governance Arrangements

The governance framework for the capital strategy is underpinned by a number of codes of practice as outlined within this document. The Prudential Indicators are monitored and reported to the Audit Committee during the financial year with variances highlighted and investigated.

Control and oversight is maintained by the Treasurer with day to day decision making delegated to officers. The capital expenditure plans are managed by the Service, with financing and treasury management arrangements delegated to Conwy County Borough Council as part of the Financial Services contract.

Officers and staff are supported through the appointment of professional advisors, Arlingclose Limited who provide professional Treasury Management services, thus ensuring appropriate risk management.

9.0 Prudential Indicators

The Local Government Act 2003 requires the Authority to adopt the CIPFA Prudential Code for Capital Finance. The key objective of the Prudential Code is to ensure that the capital investment plans of the Authority are affordable, prudent and sustainable.

To aid those charged with governance, the Prudential Code requires the adoption of indicators which either summarise the expected capital activity or introduces limits upon that activity. These indicators reflect the outcome of the Authority's capital appraisal systems and ensures that controls are in place, including appropriate risk awareness and management.

The table below confirms the indicators for the following 3 years. These indicators provide the framework of control for the Authority.

		2021/22 Forecast (£'000)	2022/23 Budget (£'000)	2023/24 Budget (£'000)	2024/25 Budget (£'000)
1	Capital Expenditure	1,027	2,916	3,620	3,630
2	Capital Financing Requirement	29,385	29,389	30,943	32,469
3	Authorised Limit	31,385	31,389	32,943	34,469
4	Operational Boundary	29,385	29,389	30,943	32,469
5	Ratio of Financing Costs to Net Expenditure	6.3%	5.7%	6.0%	5.9%
6	Investments	825	0	0	0
7	Fixed Interest rate loans as a % of Total Borrowing	Minimum 65% Maximum 100%			
8	Variable rate loans as a % of Total Borrowing	Minimum 0% Maximum 35%			
9	Maturity Structure of Fixed Rate Borrowing				
		Upper Limit		Lower Limit	
	Under 12 months	60%		0%	
	12 months to 2 years	45%		0%	
	2 years to 5 years	45%		0%	
	5 years to 10 years	75%		0%	
	10 years and above	100%		0%	

Report to	North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority
Date	14 March 2022
Lead Officer	Helen MacArthur, Assistant Chief Fire Officer (Finance and Resources)
Contact Officer	Helen Howard, Head of Finance
Subject	Provisional Outturn 2021/22



PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1 To present the projected revenue and capital expenditure position for 2021/22, as at 31 January 2022.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 2 The Authority approved the 2021/22 revenue budget of £37.074m at its meeting on 9 November 2020. The forecast outturn position remains that the Authority will achieve a breakeven position against this budget.
- 3 The Authority approved the 2021/22 capital budget of £3.08m on 9 November 2020. The capital programme remains under review, due to the ongoing Covid 19 restrictions, an updated capital plan of £2.985m was agreed at the meeting on 15 March 2021.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4 Members are asked to:
 - (i) note the draft revenue and capital outturn projections for the 2021/22 financial year as detailed within the report; and
 - (ii) note the budget realignment request.

OBSERVATIONS FROM EXECUTIVE PANEL/AUDIT COMMITTEE

- 5 This report has not previously been considered by members.

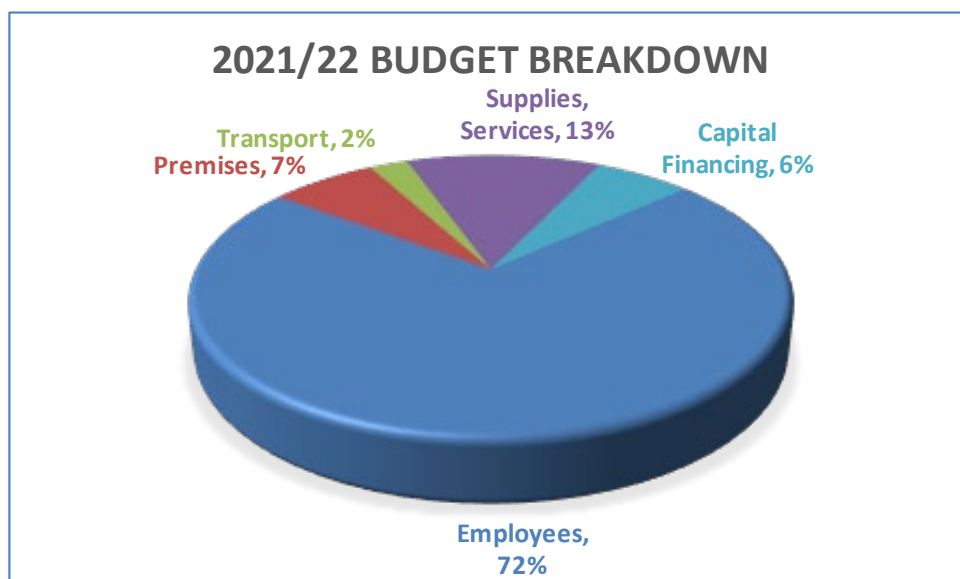
BACKGROUND

- 6 This report provides information on the draft revenue and capital expenditure outturn position for the 2021/22 financial year.

INFORMATION

REVENUE BUDGET

- 7 The budget for 2021/22 of £37.074m was agreed at the Authority meeting on 9 November 2020. Following further planning work, the overall budget requirement was confirmed at the Authority meeting on the 15 March 2021, as a number of revisions were made within expenditure headings. The revenue budget has remained under review throughout the financial year and Appendix 1 provides information on the current position.
- 8 The main expenditure headings are detailed below.

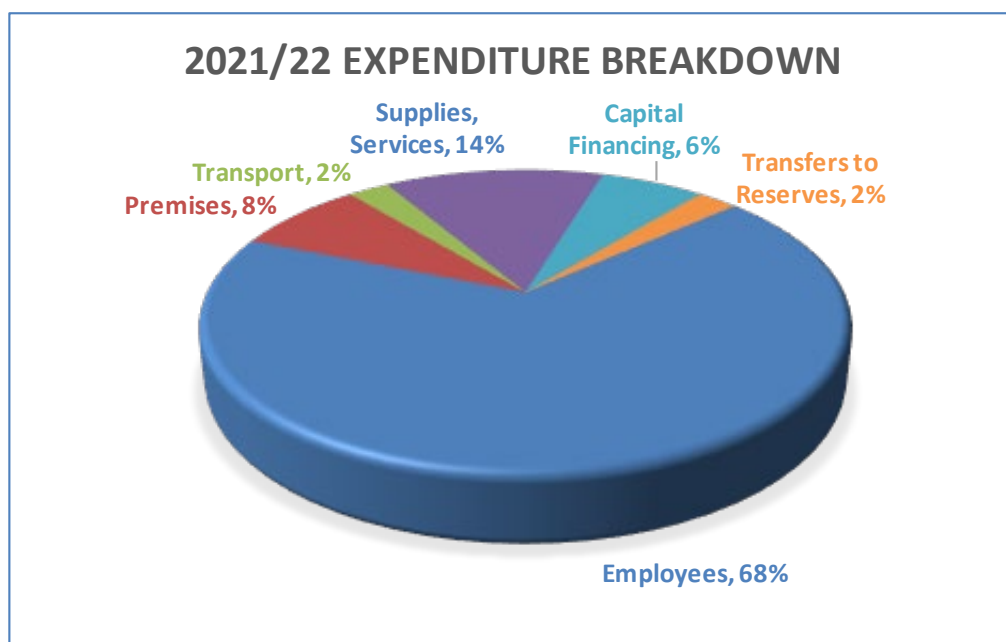


- 9 Staff costs represent 72% of net expenditure. The budget is set on the approved staffing establishment, including 18 new firefighter apprentices who commenced in April and June 2021.
- 10 The budget setting process included an assumption that pay awards would be 2% for all staff. A pay award of 1.5% has been agreed for Chief Officers and firefighter roles. The local government pay award of 1.75% was agreed on 28 February 2022. This agreement was reached following union ballots and will be applied within the March salaries.
- 11 The non-pay budgets reflect the known unavoidable cost pressures that are being experienced in relation to utility costs, backlog maintenance, fuel costs and ICT costs, including software licences and maintenance contracts.

- 12 Whilst the majority of expenditure is funded from the constituent authority levy, income is received from the Welsh Government for grant funded activities and recharges from other bodies in relation to the use of our premises. Details on the income budget are in paragraph 23.
- 13 Capital financing costs include the costs of borrowing and revenue charges for using capital assets. When the budget was set, a rise in the Bank of England base rates was not anticipated during 2021/22. The subsequent increase has not resulted in a significant impact on the position, due to all loans being on fixed interest rates and will only impact for new borrowings. This has been factored into the forecast.

REVENUE OUTTURN

- 14 The report is projecting an overall balanced position, including transfers to earmarked reserves. The breakdown of expenditure is detailed below and shows that compared to budget, employee costs are predicted to be 4% lower than the budget, whilst there is continued pressure in relation to supplies and services and premises costs.



- 15 Underspends within the pay budget, are offsetting the increased costs within supplies and services.
- 16 Any increases in the earmarked reserves will fund known future challenges and the Service's priorities.
- 17 Further details of the outturn position are provided in Appendix 1 and the summary below.

Employee Costs

- 18 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.
- 19 During the financial year, progress has been made in recruiting to vacancies although this will not be completed and a number of vacancies will not be filled before March 2022. These posts remain critical to achieving the corporate objectives and recruitment and selection will continue.
- 20 Action continues to increase the number of retained duty firefighters and although the planned increase of 30 retained firefighters for this financial year will not be fully achieved this continues to be a significant area of focus.
- 21 Any underspend from the vacant posts will be used, in the first instance, to offset the pressures within the non-pay budgets.

Non Pay Costs

- 22 There are non-pay pressures within budgets relating to increased costs for computer licences and maintenance, transformation projects including agile working, repairs and maintenance of buildings and higher levels of personal protection equipment as a result of the ongoing Covid 19 pandemic. Further information is available in Appendix 1.
- 23 A review of non-pay expenditure is undertaken by budget holders to ensure that the projections continue to be reasonable.

Income

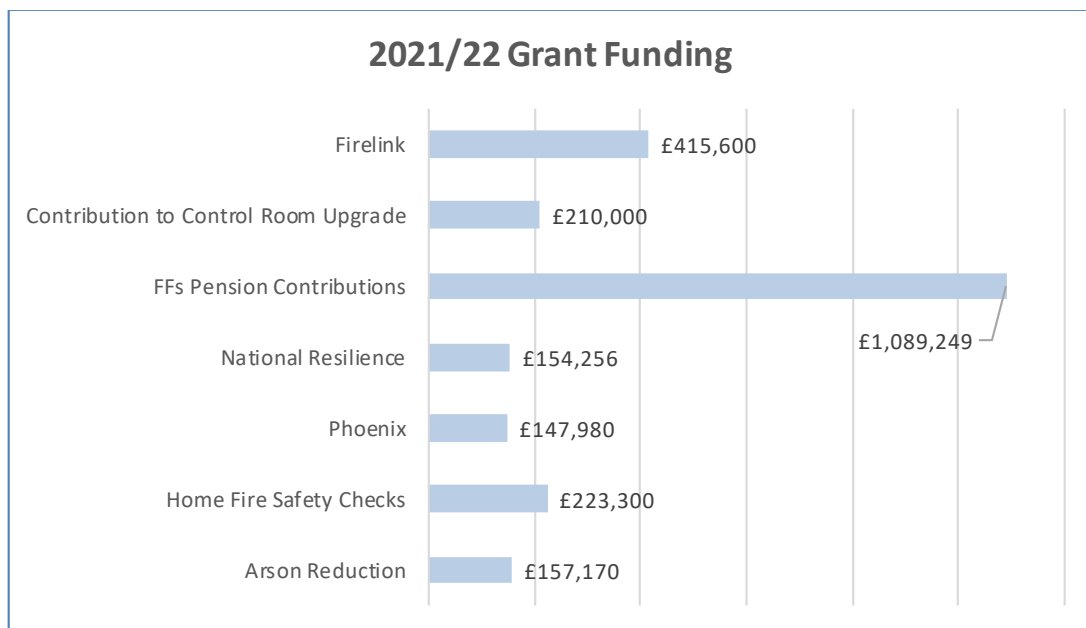
- 24 As well as the constituent authority levy, the budget also includes expected income for fees and charges and grants.
- 25 Fees and charges largely relate to the recharges for buildings shared with other bodies.

	Budget £000	Projection £000	Variance £000
Grants	2,187	2,397	210
Fees and charges	298	401	103
Total	2,485	2,798	313

- 26 The additional grant income relates to Welsh Government funding, agreed in February, towards the upgrade of one of the Control Room IT systems, to ensure that it will be compatible with the new Emergency Services Network.
- 27 Other income increased due to additional government funding for apprentice training and the continuing recovery of outstanding amounts relating to masts on Service sites.

Grant Funding

- 28 2021/22 grant funding allocations totals £2.397m (2020/21: £2.209m). A breakdown of grant funding, for 2021/22, is detailed below. All grants are carefully monitored throughout the financial year to identify any variances and to enable remedial action to be taken.



USE OF EARMARKED RESERVES

- 29 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.
- 30 In 2020/21 earmarked reserves were set aside to fund costs that should have been incurred in 2020/21, but due to the Covid 19 pandemic were delayed. Supply chain issues, have now meant that some works have been delayed in 2021/22 and therefore, once the full effect of this is known, the cost currently included in the outturn may need to be set aside to ensure funding is available next year.

- 31 The provisional outturn assumes that reserves will increase by £0.97m. The increase is largely due to work not completed on the estate and ongoing work to IT systems. The use of reserves is kept under review as part of the budget monitoring process.

REALIGNED REVENUE BUDGET

- 32 Since the last report, there has been a requirement to realign the budget.

Budget heading	Previous Budget £	Budget £	Virement £
Employees	28,407,680	28,379,188	(28,492)
Premises	2,682,154	2,724,768	42,614
Transport	998,061	983,060	(15,001)
Supplies and Services	4,997,183	5,004,849	7,666
Capital Financing	2,467,243	2,467,243	0
Grant Funding	(2,187,555)	(2,187,555)	0
Income	(290,529)	(297,316)	(6,787)
Total	37,074,237	37,074,237	0

CAPITAL PROGRAMME

- 33 The Authority approved a capital programme of £2.985m, in March 2021. Due to the Covid 19 pandemic, it has been necessary to review and revise the capital programme to reflect projects which can be delivered in year.
- 34 All building works have been reviewed and costs relating to non-enhancing minor works have been removed from the budget and will be funded from revenue and reserves.
- 35 The revised capital plan is £2.386m.
- 36 The provisional outturn for the capital programme is £1.176m.

		Capital Plan @ Mar 2021 £m	Capital Plan @ 31 July 2021 £m	Projection £m	Rollover £m
Fleet	Replacement vehicles and appliances	2.028	2.099	1.176	923
Facilities	Building upgrades	790	120	0	120
Information Technology	System upgrades and associated works	167	167	0	167
	Total	2.985	2.386	1.176	1.210

37 Since the last report, funding will have to be rolled over in relation to the ICT costs. This relates to a replacement server for the control room. Whilst this is progressing, the potential replacement of the command and control software in 2023/24 needs to be considered as part of the scoping work.

38 The financing of the capital plan is as follows:

Funding	Amount £m
Borrowing	1.028
Earmarked Reserves	148
Total	1.176

CAPITAL FINANCING

39 The capital financing budget sets aside revenue funding to finance capital expenditure.

40 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.

- 41 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).
- 42 Since the MRP budget was set, capital expenditure expected in 2020/21 did not materialise and therefore there is an under spend on this budget.

BORROWING

- 43 Capital expenditure is largely funded via external borrowing. Conwy County Borough Council manages the Authority's treasury management activities. Although the capital expenditure is largely funded via loans in the short term the Authority utilises surplus revenue cash.
- 44 The Authority's borrowings are projected to be £22.617m at 31 March 2022. This includes £9.0m of temporary short term loans, from other public sector bodies and £13.617m of loans from the Public Works Loans Board.
- 45 All loans have a fixed interest rate. The interest on borrowings is projected to be £0.299m

IMPLICATIONS

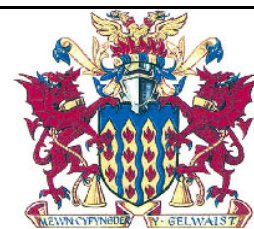
Wellbeing Objectives	This report links to NWFRA's long-term well-being objectives. Funding for the Service benefits the communities of North Wales and ensures there is sufficient investment in infrastructure to enable the service to provide emergency responses and prevention work well in to the future.
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	None
Equalities/Human Rights/Welsh Language	None
Risks	Income and expenditure is closely monitored to ensure that deviations from the approved budget are properly identified and reported to Members.

Appendix 1 – Subjective Breakdown 2021/22

Budget Heading	Budget £	Projection £	Variance £	Commentary
Employees	28,379,188	27,051,034	(1,328,154)	There are a number of vacancies throughout the Service. Recruitment has re-commenced and these posts remain critical to achieving the Authority's objectives. In addition the budget projected an increase in the number of retained firefighters. Due to Covid 19 restrictions, which has hampered the recruitment process, the increase in numbers has not materialised.
Premises	2,724,768	3,137,192	412,424	The projected overspend relates to the backlog of repairs and maintenance work required on stations, due to the Covid 19 restrictions in 2020/21, which is expected to be completed by year end. The projection also assumes work will commence on sustainability works to improve the energy efficiency of the estate.
Transport	983,060	984,521	1,461	As activities increase, transport costs are increasing. Additional budget of £0.05m has been provided due to the increase in fuel prices. Travel costs still remain lower than pre-pandemic levels, as staff continue to, where possible, conduct meetings on line and work from home.
Supplies and Services	5,004,849	5,259,520	254,671	This includes increased costs in relation to computer licences, maintenance including the rollout of M365 and equipment, as well as costs in relation to transformation projects including agile working.
Capital Financing	2,467,243	2,467,243	0	There is an anticipated underspend of £0.14m which reflects the reduction in the 2020/21 capital programme, however it is anticipated that this will be used to increase the capital financing reserve

Budget Heading	Budget £	Projection £	Variance £	Commentary
Grant Funding	(2,187,555)	(2,397,555)	(210,000)	All grant funding is expected to be utilised in year. Additional grant funding, from the Welsh Government has been agreed in February towards the cost of upgrading one of the Control Room IT systems, in preparation for the new Emergency Services Network. These costs are within the Supplies projection.
Income	(297,316)	(400,601)	(103,285)	The majority of the income relates to costs reimbursed for the use of facilities. The additional income relates to the sale of obsolete equipment and the continued recovery of amounts outstanding in relation to masts on Service sites.
Transfers to/(from) Reserves	0	972,883	972,883	The transfer to reserves largely relates to works that have not been able to be carried out due to ongoing Covid 19 restrictions and the unavailability of suppliers. It also includes increasing the capital financing reserve to fund increased borrowing costs following the interest rate rises since the 2022/23 budget was agreed and future changes to statutory training requirements.
Total	37,074,237	37,074,237	(0)	

Report to	North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority
Date	14 March 2022
Lead Officer	Helen MacArthur, Assistant Chief Fire Officer
Contact Officer	Helen MacArthur
Subject	Pay Policy Statement 2022/23



PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1 To inform Members of the Fire and Rescue Authority's responsibilities arising from the Localism Act 2011 (the Act).
- 2 The Act requires the Fire and Rescue Authority (the Authority) to prepare an annual Pay Policy Statement for approval before the commencement of the financial year to which it relates.
- 3 This paper sets out the proposed Pay Policy Statement for 2022/23.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 4 The Authority is required to prepare and approve a Pay Policy Statement on an annual basis in accordance with the Localism Act 2011. The statement must also comply with the Welsh Government guidance issued in 2017, "Pay Accountability in Local Government in Wales"

OBSERVATIONS FROM THE EXECUTIVE PANEL OR AUDIT COMMITTEE

- 5 This report has not previously been considered.

RECOMMENDATION

- 6 Members are requested to
 - i. note the requirements of the Localism Act 2011; and
 - ii. approve the Pay Policy Statement for the 2022/23 financial year.

BACKGROUND

- 7 A Pay Policy Statement must be prepared in accordance with Part 1; Chapter 8 (Sections 38 – 43) of the Localism Act 2011. The guidance issued by the Welsh Government summarises the key elements of the Pay Policy Statement which includes:

- (a) Information relating to the remuneration of its chief officers;
- (b) the remuneration of its lowest paid employees; and
- (c) the relationship between:
 - (i) the remuneration of its chief officers, and
 - (ii) the remuneration of its employees who are not chief officers.

8 The statement must state:

- (a) the definition of “lowest-paid employees” adopted by the Authority for the purposes of the statement; and
- (b) the Authority's reasons for adopting that definition.

9 The statement must also include the Authority's policies relating to:

- (i) the level and elements of remuneration for each chief officer;
- (ii) remuneration of chief officers on recruitment;
- (iii) increases and additions to remuneration for each chief officer;
- (iv) the use of performance-related pay for chief officers;
- (v) the use of bonuses for chief officers;
- (vi) the approach to the payment of chief officers on their ceasing to hold office under or to be employed by the authority; and
- (vii) the publication of and access to information relating to remuneration of chief officers.

INFORMATION

10 The purpose of this Pay Policy Statement is to provide transparency with regard to the Authority's approach to setting the pay of its employees, in particular, that of chief officers and employees on the lowest pay scale, by identifying the methods by which salaries are determined.

IMPLICATIONS

Wellbeing Objectives	The Pay Policy Statement provides a framework for decision making on pay and in particular decision making on senior pay, contributing to securing the Authority's financial sustainability and to being able to demonstrate the fair and equitable allocation of pay.
Budget	Pay awards agreed and published by the National Joint Councils are taken into consideration when setting the Authority's annual budget.
Legal	Under section 38(1) of the Localism Act 2011 the Fire and Rescue Authority has a legal duty to produce an annual Pay Policy Statement by 31 March preceding the year of the statement.
Staffing	The Pay Policy Statement supports the principles of transparency, equal pay and support for staff.
Equalities/Human Rights/ Welsh Language	Equal treatment in respect of pay is an important part of the FRA Equality objectives.
Risks	Non-compliance with legislation leads to legal and reputational risk.

North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority Pay Policy Statement 2022/23

1.0 Introduction

1.1 North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority's (the Authority) primary role is to:

- perform all the duties and responsibilities of a Fire and Rescue Authority in accordance with appropriate legislation and regulations, in particular the [Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004](#), and the [Regulatory Reform \(Fire Safety\) Order 2005](#) (which came into force on 1 October 2006), and the [1995 Combination Scheme](#);
- agree the annual service plans the revenue and capital budgets and the contribution for the constituent councils; and
- monitor the revenue and capital budgets and deal with any significant variations, including decisions on any supplementary contributions.

1.2 In order to fulfil its role, the Authority appoints staff to undertake duties on its behalf and in doing so must follow all relevant employment legislation. The Authority also follows a number of key principles which ensure affordability, equal pay, transparency and support for low pay.

1.3 The purpose of this document is to meet the Authority's legal obligations under the Localism Act 2011 and to provide information regarding the Authority's approach to setting the pay of its employees. It provides information on the remuneration of Chief Officers and employees on the lowest pay scale. It also provides information on the methods by which salaries are determined for all staff.

1.4 The document covers the period 1 April 2022- 31 March 2023 and provides a framework for decision making on pay and in particular decision making on senior pay.

1.5 The Pay Policy Statement is an annual document prepared and approved by the Authority prior to the commencement of the financial year to which it relates.

2.0 Legislative framework

2.1 Section 38 (1) of the Localism Act 2011 requires English and Welsh Local Authorities to produce a Pay Policy Statement from 2012/13 and for each financial year after that. The Act also requires the Authority to have due regard for any guidance issued by Welsh Ministers. The Welsh Government updated the guidance in November 2021, "Pay Accountability within Local Government in Wales".

- 2.2 The Act defines remuneration widely and includes pay, allowances, benefits in kind, increases in/enhancements of pension entitlements and termination payments.
- 2.3 In determining the pay and remuneration of all its employees, the Authority is required to comply with all relevant legislation. This includes the Equality Act 2010, Part Time Employment (Prevention of Less Favourable Treatment) Regulations 2000, Agency Workers Regulations 2010 and, where relevant, the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 2006.
- 2.4 The Authority ensures that there is no pay discrimination within its pay structures to meet its obligations under the equal pay requirements of the Equality Act 2010. Job evaluation processes are embedded across the organisation to ensure that pay differentials between employees can be objectively justified and salaries directly relate to the requirements, demands and responsibilities of the role.

3.0 Decision making including consideration of value for money

- 3.1 This policy applies to all North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority employees.
- 3.2 The Authority advocates collective bargaining arrangements and supports existing national level provisions that govern pay and conditions of service for the following employee groups:
- National Joint Council (NJC) for Brigade Managers of Fire and Rescue Services, Constitution and Scheme of Conditions of Service (Gold Book)
 - Joint Negotiating Committee for Chief Officers of Local Authorities; Constitution, Conditions of Service, Salaries (Blue Book)
 - National Joint Council for Local Authorities' Fire and Rescue Services, Scheme of Conditions of Service (Grey Book)
 - National Joint Council (NJC) for Local Government Services (Green Book).
- 3.3 Pay levels are reviewed annually through these collective bargaining arrangements and any "cost of living" award associated with contractual conditions is implemented upon receipt of notification from the relevant negotiating body.
- 3.4 The Authority will consider any contractual 'cost of living' award for its chief officers in the context of similar decisions on lower paid employees and in accordance with the outcome of collective bargaining outlined above.
- 3.5 All roles conditioned to the NJC for Local Government Services are subject to the Authority's job evaluation scheme which objectively assesses each role on creation of a new post, changes to existing posts or at periodic intervals to determine a fair remuneration pay grade comparable across this group of staff. On voluntary cessation of their duties no additional payments will be made.

3.6 In accordance with the constitution, the Authority is responsible for approving the annual financial budget including the affordability of employee costs.

4.0 Role of the Chief Fire Officer

4.1 The Chief Fire Officer is the Head of Paid Service and is responsible for the Service. The role is a full time appointment and the post holder is appointed on merit and against objective criteria following an open competitive process. The selection process is overseen by an Appointment Panel comprising of members of the Authority.

4.2 The Chief Fire Officer works closely with elected members to deliver the strategic aims of the Authority. The organisation has an annual revenue budget of approximately £37 million and a capital budget of £3 million and is responsible for a wide range of services under the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004, employing some 862 staff.

5.0 Chief Officers' Pay

5.1 The Authority's pay policy for the remuneration of chief officers, including the Chief Fire Officer, is aligned to the National Joint Council arrangements. Under these arrangements, Brigade Manager pay is reviewed annually at national level which provides the minimum salary for chief fire officers.

5.2 Remuneration of chief officers on appointment will be to the market-related base pay prevailing at the time of appointment and approved by the full Authority. In addition, a car will be provided in order to carry out the roles.

5.3 The remuneration of chief officers is also subject to a pay review undertaken on a periodical basis. This process benchmarks the chief officer salary levels against relevant comparators in other fire and rescue authorities. The pay review was undertaken by the Monitoring Officer during 2021 and the following principles were approved by the Fire and Rescue Authority:

- i. pay scales will be linked to the average basic pay rates collated and published by the National Joint Council for Brigade Managers of Local Authority Fire and Rescue Services in order to give appropriate sector-specific comparisons;
- ii. each seniority level will be employed on a three point scale with progression up the scale to be subject to satisfactory annual appraisal. Each increment in scale will be based upon £1,500 for the CFO; and a relative proportion for the other posts;
- iii. the Authority will pay, at the bottom of the three point scale, the average basic pay for an authority in Population Band 2, which will be inclusive of all duties;

- iv. the nationally negotiated and agreed annual pay awards will be automatically applied, as currently happens in the case of “grey book” and “green book” employees (subject to an employee choosing to forego any part of it);
- v. the pay relativities between the roles of CFO, DCFO, ACFO and ACO will be restored. The salary of each seniority level will be calculated as a proportion of the Chief Fire Officer’s salary as follows :

	Salary relative to CFO
Chief Fire Officer	
Deputy Chief Fire Officer	80%
Assistant Chief Fire Officer	75%
Assistant Chief Officer	60%

- vi. posts will be sized appropriately, relative to their seniority level, and will be of equal size across all at that level in order to ensure that officers receive equal pay for work of equal value; and
- vii. pay will be reviewed at regular intervals in line with the requirements under the ‘two- track’ approach for determining levels of pay for Brigade Managers as prescribed by the National Joint Council. Three years is the accepted interval.

5.4 The Authority does not pay any bonuses or additional enhancements such as performance related pay. On voluntary cessation of their duties no additional payments will be made to chief officers.

5.5 Following resignation or retirement from their duties no additional payments will be made other than those due for salary purposes or payments made to an individual in line with the appropriate pension scheme on retirement. Such payments may include salary paid in lieu of notice, pension benefit entitlements and holiday pay.

5.6 In circumstances where a severance package is being considered upon an agreed cessation of duties other than for the reasons outlined above, the full Authority will be offered the opportunity to vote before any severance package is approved for chief officers.

5.7 Information on the remuneration of chief officers is published as part of North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority’s annual Statement of Accounts. These are published on the Authority’s website.

5.8 Business expenses such as for train, car mileage, overnight accommodation and parking are claimed back in accordance with the organisation’s travel and subsistence policy which is applicable to all employees.

5.9 Chief officers are members of the relevant pension scheme. The Authority does not permit increases or enhancements to the pension outside of standard arrangements.

5.10 The notice period for chief officer roles is 3 months.

6.0 Senior Staff

6.1 For the purposes of this Pay Policy Statement the term “chief officer” is not limited to Head of Paid Service and includes those who report directly to the Chief Fire Officer. This includes the Monitoring Officer, the Section 151 Officer, Deputy Chief Fire Officer, Assistant Chief Fire Officers and Assistant Chief Officers.

6.2 These posts are covered by a range of terms and conditions:

Employee Group	Terms and Conditions	Other benefits	Pension arrangements
Chief Fire Officer	Gold Book	Car provided	Local Government Pension Scheme
Monitoring Officer	Provided by a named officer from Flintshire County Council under a contracted out arrangement		
Treasurer (section 151 officer)	Part time contract negotiated outside of national terms and conditions.		
Deputy Chief Fire Officer	Gold Book	Car provided	Local Government Pension Scheme or Firefighters' Pension Scheme
Assistant Chief Fire Officer	Gold Book	Car provided	Local Government Pension Scheme or Firefighters' Pension Scheme
Assistant Chief Officer	Blue Book	Car provided	Local Government Pension Scheme

7.0 Talent management

7.1 The Authority's strategic focus is on supporting and developing the quality of leadership in the Service. This includes increasing the capacity of existing management teams, planning the development of future leaders, championing leadership values throughout the organisation and attracting effective leaders, where appropriate, from other sectors.

8.0 Performance related pay

8.1 There is currently no performance related pay scheme in operation for any role across the Service.

9.0 Remuneration of other staff other than chief officers

9.1 The Authority's pay policy for the remuneration of employees who are not chief officers is aligned to nationally agreed salary rates negotiated through the National Joint Council comprising of national employer and employee representatives..

Employee Group	Terms and Conditions	Other benefits	Pension Arrangements
Officers (Station Managers, Group Managers and Area Managers)	Grey Book	A lease car is provided for staff on the flexi duty rota	Firefighters' Pension Scheme
Head of Corporate Departments	Blue Book	NONE	Local Government Pension Scheme
Firefighters	Grey Book	NONE	Firefighters' Pension Scheme
Apprentice Firefighters	Grey Book	NONE	Local Government Pension Scheme
Control Staff	Grey Book	NONE	Local Government Pension Scheme
Fire Safety and Prevention	Green Book	NONE	Local Government Pension Scheme
Corporate Services	Green Book	NONE*	Local Government Pension Scheme
Apprentices	Green Book	NONE	Local Government Pension Scheme
* A lease car is provided on an optional basis for a small number of posts where significant or frequent travel is undertaken			

9.2 The lowest paid employee is engaged on the National Joint Council (NJC) for Local Government Services (Green Book) spinal column point 6 which equates to £20,043 per annum from 1 April 2021. The Authority occasionally employs apprentices who are not included within the definition of 'lowest paid employees' as they are not employed under contracts of employment.

9.3 The statutory guidance under the Localism Act 2011 recommends the use of pay multiples as a means of measuring the relationship between pay rates across the workforce and that of senior managers, as included within the Hutton 'Review of Fair Pay in the Public Sector' (2010).

9.4 The 2021/22 pay levels within the Authority define the multiple between the average of lowest paid (full time equivalent basic pay) employee scales and the Chief Fire Officer as 1:7.00 and between the lowest paid employee.

- 9.5 The Hutton report on fair pay in the public sector was asked to explore the case for a fixed limit on pay dispersion in the public sector, through a requirement that no public sector manager can earn more than 20 times the lowest paid person in the organisation. The report concluded that the relationship to median earnings was a more relevant measure and the Government's Code of Recommended Practice on Data Transparency recommends the publication of the ratio between highest paid salary and the median salary of the whole of the Authority's workforce. The multiple between the median full time basic equivalent earnings and the Chief Fire Officer is 1:4.28 (excluding RDS). Please note this figure includes full time salaries only and excludes allowances.
- 9.6 The Authority publishes information on the remuneration of Chief Officers, the median earnings of the organisation's workforce, and the ratio between these two figures in their annual financial statement to demonstrate the relationship between the two.

10.0 Support for lower paid staff

- 10.1 All employees of the Fire and Rescue Service are paid above the living wage. A range of further support measures are offered including a cycle to work scheme, Employee Assistance Programme, counselling, Occupational Health services and childcare vouchers.
- 10.2 A physiotherapy scheme is also offered to all employees. Employees receive financial assistance to refer themselves for therapy arising from muscular-skeletal injury or other ailments.
- 10.3 A range of flexible benefits have also been introduced including corporate discounts. Non-pay benefits and rewards assist with the development of an effective employment package and utilise reward systems whereby employees are able to flex the rewards they receive so they get more of whatever element is important to them at different stages of their careers.

11.0 Additions to Salary of Other Employees

- 11.1 Where appropriate, and in line with national conditions of service or local agreement, individuals may receive an allowance in addition to their salary. Examples include, but are not restricted to:
- on-call or out of hours provision
 - continuous availability
 - additional responsibility
 - rent, fuel and light allowance
 - telephone allowance
 - pension employer contributions
 - mileage allowances.

12.0 Honoraria

- 12.1 A member of staff who performs duties outside the scope of his or her post over an extended period may be granted a one-off additional payment of an amount dependent upon the circumstances of each case. Examples include:
- where an employee temporarily carries out significant additional work over and above their usual responsibilities; or
 - where an employee carries out a significant amount of work over their normal contracted hours, but is not eligible for overtime payments because of their placing on a salary scale.
- 12.2 Any determination relating to a proposed honoraria for chief officers would require approval by the Authority.
- 12.3 Decisions relating to all other staff will be considered by the appropriate Head of Department in consultation with the Assistant Chief Fire Officer (Finance and Resources).

13.0 Exit policy

- 13.1 On voluntary cessation of their duties no additional payments will be made other than those due for salary purposes or payments made to an individual in line with the appropriate pension scheme on retirement. Such payments may include salary paid in lieu of notice, pension benefit entitlements, holiday pay and any fees or allowances paid.
- 13.2 Employees conditioned to the NJC for Local Government Services may, at the Authority's discretion be entitled to added pension and/or redundancy payments upon authority initiated early termination of employment under the Authority's discretions in relation to the Local Government Pension Scheme Regulations 1997 (as amended) and the Local Government (Early Termination of Employment) (England and Wales) Regulations 2006 (as amended) – generally referred to as the Discretionary Compensation Regulations.
- 13.3 The Service has a policy for severance or exit arrangements.
- 13.4 Former employees are, on occasion, re-employed by the Fire and Rescue Service. Where the combined earnings and pension exceed the inflation adjusted final salary in the original employment the pension is subject to abatement in accordance with the scheme regulations.

14.0 Off payroll arrangements

- 14.1 The Authority does not routinely engage with individuals using off payroll arrangements. These are only considered on an exceptional basis for specialist pieces of work for which there is no internal capacity or expertise. The Authority has arrangements in place to ensure that the employment status indicator tool published by HMRC is completed for each supplier before payments are made.

15.0 Appendices

Appendix 1 Chief Officers' salary matrix

Appendix 2 NJC salary rates

2.1 Firefighter Roles

2.2 Retained Duty System

2.3 Control Roles

Appendix 3 NJC for local government services, salary matrix

**North Wales Fire and Rescue Service
Chief Officers Pay Rates**

Post	Salary	Salary	Salary	% of CFO
	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	
CFO*	£138,060	£139,560	£141,060	
DCFO*	£110,448	£111,648	£112,848	80%
ACFO*	£103,545	£104,670	£105,795	75%
ACO	£82,836	£83,736	£84,636	60%

- includes remuneration for continuous duty arrangements

External provision of service	Value (per annum)
Monitoring Officer	£16,878 (excluding VAT)
Section 151 Officer	£7,812

FIREFIGHTING ROLES - PAY RATES FROM 1 JULY 2021

	Basic annual £	Basic hourly rate £	Overtime rate £
Firefighter			
Trainee	24,191	11.05	16.58
Development	25,198	11.51	17.27
Competent	32,244	14.72	22.08
Crew Manager			
Development	34,269	15.65	23.48
Competent	35,747	16.32	24.48
Watch Manager			
Development	36,521	16.68	25.02
Competent A	37,535	17.14	25.71
Competent B	39,974	18.25	27.38
Station Manager			
Development	41,578	18.99	28.49
Competent A	42,827	19.56	29.34
Competent B	45,861	20.94	31.41
Group Manager			
Development	47,887	21.87	Not Applicable
Competent A	49,323	22.52	“
Competent B	53,086	24.24	“
Area Manager			
Development	56,220	25.67	Not applicable
Competent A	57,905	26.44	“
Competent B	61,667	28.16	“

APPENDIX 2.2

**FIREFIGHTING ROLES – PAY RATES FROM 1 JULY 2021
(RETAINED DUTY SYSTEM)**

	(1) £ per Annum	(2) £ per annum	(3) £ per Hour	(4) £ per occasion
Firefighter				
Trainee	2,419	1,210	11.05	4.24
Development	2,520	1,260	11.51	4.24
Competent	3,224	1,612	14.72	4.24
Crew Manager				
Development	3,427	1,713	15.65	4.24
Competent	3,575	1,787	16.32	4.24
Watch Manager				
Development	3,652	1,826	16.68	4.24
Competent A	3,754	1,877	17.14	4.24
Competent B	3,997	1,999	18.25	4.24
Station Manager				
Development	4,158	2,079	18.99	4.24
Competent A	4,283	2,141	19.56	4.24
Competent B	4,586	2,293	20.94	4.24
Group Manager				
Development	4,789	2,394	21.87	4.24
Competent A	4,932	2,466	22.52	4.24
Competent B	5,309	2,654	24.24	4.24
Area Manager				
Development	5,622	2,811	25.67	4.24
Competent A	5,791	2,895	26.44	4.24
Competent B	6,167	3,083	28.16	4.24

Column 1 shows the full annual retainer (10% of the full-time basic annual salary, as set out in Appendix A)

Column 2 shows the retainer for employees on the day crewing duty system (5% of the full-time basic annual salary, as set out in Appendix A)

Column 3 shows the hourly rate for work undertaken

Column 4 shows the disturbance payment per call-out

CONTROL SPECIFIC ROLES - PAY RATES FROM 1 JULY 2021

	Basic annual* £	Basic hourly rate £	Overtime rate £
Firefighter (Control)			
Trainee	22,981	10.49	15.74
Development	23,938	10.93	16.40
Competent	30,632	13.99	20.99
Crew Manager (Control)			
Development	32,556	14.87	22.31
Competent	33,960	15.51	23.27
Watch Manager (Control)			
Development	34,695	15.84	23.76
Competent A	35,658	16.28	24.42
Competent B	37,975	17.34	26.01
Station Manager (Control)			
Development	39,499	18.04	27.06
Competent A	40,686	18.58	27.87
Competent B	43,568	19.89	29.84
Group Manager (Control)			
Development	45,493	20.77	Not applicable
Competent A	46,857	21.40	“
Competent B	50,432	23.03	“

*(95% of the respective firefighting role basic annual salary, as set out in Appendix A)

NON-OPERATIONAL STAFF - PAY RATES FROM 1 JULY 2021

	£ per annum
Fire Control Operator equivalent	
During first six months	20,603
After six months and during 2 nd year	21,517
During 3 rd year	22,537
During 4 th year	23,646
During 5 th year	25,755
Leading Fire Control Operator equivalent	27,581
Senior Fire Control Operator equivalent	
During 1 st year in rank	28,287
During 2 nd year in rank	29,360

JUNIOR FIREFIGHTERS - PAY RATES FROM 1 JULY 2021

	£ per annum
Aged 16	11,191
Aged 17	12,025
Aged 18	24,191

PAY RATES FROM 1 APRIL 2021 FOR STAFF EMPLOYED ON GREEN BOOK TERMS AND CONDITIONS

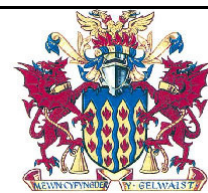
SCP	01-Apr-21	
	per annum	per hour
1	£18,333	£9.50
2	£18,516	£9.60
3	£18,887	£9.79
4	£19,264	£9.99
5	£19,650	£10.19
6	£20,043	£10.39
7	£20,444	£10.60
8	£20,852	£10.81
9	£21,269	£11.02
10	£21,695	£11.25
11	£22,129	£11.47
12	£22,571	£11.70
13	£23,023	£11.93
14	£23,484	£12.17
15	£23,953	£12.42
16	£24,432	£12.66
17	£24,920	£12.92
18	£25,419	£13.18
19	£25,927	£13.44
20	£26,446	£13.71
21	£26,975	£13.98
22	£27,514	£14.26
23	£28,226	£14.63
24	£29,174	£15.12
25	£30,095	£15.60
26	£30,984	£16.06
27	£31,895	£16.53
28	£32,798	£17.00
29	£33,486	£17.36
30	£34,373	£17.82
31	£35,336	£18.32
32	£36,371	£18.85
33	£37,568	£19.47
34	£38,553	£19.98
35	£39,571	£20.51
36	£40,578	£21.03
37	£41,591	£21.56
38	£42,614	£22.09
39	£43,570	£22.58
40	£44,624	£23.13
41	£45,648	£23.66
42	£46,662	£24.19
43	£47,665	£24.71

*hourly rate calculated by dividing annual salary by 52.143 weeks (which is 365 days divided by 7) and then divided by 37 hours (the standard working week in the National Agreement 'Green Book')

**PAY RATES FROM 1 APRIL 2021 FOR STAFF EMPLOYED ON
BLUE BOOK TERMS AND CONDITIONS**

SCP	01-Apr-21	
	per annum	per hour
48	52,457	27.19
49	54,431	28.21
50	55,416	28.72
51	56,402	29.23

Report to	North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority
Date	14 March 2022
Lead Officer	Gareth Owens, Clerk to the Authority
Contact Officer	Matt Georgiou, Deputy Clerk 01745 535286
Subject	The Standards Committee's Annual Report



PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1 To present the Standards Committee annual report to the Fire and Rescue Authority as required by legislation.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 2 As a matter of good corporate governance the Standards Committee provides the Authority with an annual report on its activities during each financial year.
- 3 Consequently the Committee's seventeenth report is attached for Members' consideration.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4 That Members note the Standards Committee's annual report for 2021/22.

ANNUAL REPORT OF THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE OF NORTH WALES FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY 2021/22

Background

This is the Standards Committee's seventeenth annual report to the Fire and Rescue Authority and spans the period from April 2021 to March 2022. Legislation requires that Standards Committees meet at least annually.

The Terms of Reference of the Standards Committee provide a remit to promote and maintain high standards of conduct by 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.

Membership

There has been no change to membership during the year. Sally Ellis and Julia Hughes were unanimously re-appointed, by NWFRA, to a second term of four years on the Committee. Therefore, the Standards Committee's membership is as follows:

Independent Members

Sally Ellis 01/01/22 – 31/12/25 (second term)
Julia Hughes 01/01/22 – 31/12/25 (second term)
Gill Murgatroyd 01/09/19 – 31/08/23
Gareth Pritchard 01/09/19 – 31/08/23

Fire and Rescue Authority Members

Councillor Owen Thomas (19/06/18 until the next council elections)
Councillor Michael Dixon (09/11/20 until the next council elections)

Attendance

A meeting was held on 25 September 2021 via Zoom and again on 10 February 2022. All members were present at both meetings.

Issues Discussed

At its meeting on 25 September 2021 the Committee reviewed:

- Attendance at NWFRA meetings
- Reappointment of independent members
- Independent members' observations of NWFRA meetings
- Joint Standards Committees
- Review of the PSOW's casebook of investigations into breaches of the Members' Code of Conduct (the Code)
- Review of the Ethical Standards Framework

- Pan Wales Standards Conference
- Forward work plan.

The Committee expressed concern that some Authority members' attendance at NWFRA meetings was below 50%. The Committee was concerned that as the participation and contribution of members is important, and given that members are equally remunerated, notwithstanding attendance levels, that attendance at meetings for all members should be above 50%. Having discussed the matter at length, it was agreed to make enquiries with local authorities about increasing the minimum expectation of attendance at FRA meetings to at least 50% with effect from June 2022.

All independent members had observed at least one meeting of the FRA. The Committee considered that meetings were conducted to a high standard. There were some general themes identified by the Committee that the Committee considered may aid accessibility to meetings for members of the public and feedback will be presented to Chairs and Vice Chairs of Authority meetings following the local elections.

The Committee met again on 10 February 2022. At this meeting, Members considered the following matters:

- Review of the Ethical Standards Framework – discussed outcomes
- Feedback on attendance at meetings
- Debrief of the Pan Wales Standards Conference
- Review of Issue 25 (January – March 2021) of the PSOW's casebook of investigations into breaches of the Code
- Review of the constitution – feedback from the review group
- Review of independent members' observations of FRA meetings.

Training

The Committee has agreed that it will undertake training at each of its meetings on matters pertinent to its terms of reference. In this period the Committee received training on when the Code applies and Respect and Equality under the Code.

Forward Work Plan

The Committee has set itself a forward programme to ensure that it fulfils its terms of reference and considers all items that it needs to cover within a year. Forthcoming items include, amongst others: the regular training slot (referred to above); Annual reports and case reports from the PSOW and the Adjudication Panel for Wales; feedback from Independent Members' observations of meetings; whether to form a Joint Standards Committee with another North Wales authority (either a council or the parks authority); discuss the possibility of forming a national forum for Chairs and Vice Chairs of Standards committees and the continued review of member attendance at authority meetings.

The Committee conducts a rolling review of the codes and protocols within its terms of reference so that each is considered at least once per Authority term. That programme is complete for this term but will start again after the elections in 2022.

Complaints against Members of the Fire and Rescue Authority

There were no complaints about FRA Members during this period.

Financial Implications

The budget for the Standards Committee is managed through a single budget heading for all Authority costs. Since 2012, independent members of the Standards Committee are entitled to claim remuneration based on meetings and events attended. For attending meetings in this financial year, a total of £858 has been claimed.

Conclusion

The Standards Committee recommends that the North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority notes its annual report 2021/22.

Report to	North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority
Date	14 March 2022
Lead Member	Councillor Sue Lloyd-Williams
Lead Officer	Shân Morris, Assistant Chief Officer
Contact Officer	Llinos Gutierrez-Jones, Head of Human Resources
Subject	The Inclusive Fire Service Group (IFSG)



PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1 To update Members on the work of the Inclusive Fire Service Group (IFSG) and propose that formal meetings of this group be discontinued.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 2 The North Wales Fire and Rescue IFSG, chaired by Councillor Sue Lloyd-Williams, has driven improvements in relation to equality, diversity and inclusion since 2017.
- 3 A summary of progress in respect of the 27 Objectives in the IFSG's Improvement Strategy 2019-22 is provided for information at Appendix 1.
- 4 This report advises Members that the progress made in embedding equality, diversity and inclusion into the Service's day-to-day business is such that the need to hold formal meetings of the IFSG has now diminished.
- 5 By way of an additional safeguard, however, work is planned for the beginning of 2022/23 to check and confirm that the actions in the IFSG Improvement Strategy 2019-22 that are continuous in nature are sufficiently reflected in Service policies, procedures and/or plans.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- 6 That Members:
 - (i) note the progress made in delivering North Wales Fire and Rescue's IFSG Work Programme 2019-22;
 - (ii) note the intention to check and confirm to the Service Leadership Team that ongoing actions are reflected in Service policies, procedures and/or plans; and
 - (iii) endorse the proposal to discontinue formal meetings of North Wales Fire and Rescue's IFSG.

BACKGROUND

- 7 In October 2015 the National Joint Council for Local Authority Fire and Rescue Services (the NJC) formed an IFSG to consider matters relating to equality, diversity and cultural issues such as bullying and harassment.
- 8 In June 2017 this national IFSG proposed a set of improvement strategies and sought the support of employers and employees to take them forward at a local level.
- 9 In July 2017 Members considered the improvement strategies proposed by the IFSG and endorsed a work programme to be delivered locally. Councillor Sue Lloyd-Williams was nominated by the Executive Panel to lead this work.
- 10 In September 2018 a report to the full Authority summarised the progress being made in delivering the work programme and advised Members that a cross-cutting group chaired by Councillor Lloyd-Williams and consisting of staff members, representative bodies and senior management had begun the work of monitoring progress and promoting new initiatives in line with the agreed strategies.
- 11 In September 2019 Members were informed that significant progress had been made against key strategies. The priority at that time was to develop a new 3-year Forward Work Programme to follow on from the 2018/19 work programme.
- 12 A comprehensive Improvement Strategy 2019-22 comprising 27 objectives and 60 actions was subsequently adopted by the Service's IFSG under the chairmanship of Councillor Lloyd Williams.
- 13 In September 2021 a further update report was provided for Members, recommending that the progress made in embedding the various workstreams was such that formal meetings of the local IFSG were no longer necessary. The report also advised that a report would be presented to Members later in the year detailing the progress made.
- 14 Specifically, Members were informed that many of the initiatives in the IFSG programme had been completed, that any ongoing work had been assimilated into the Service's routine activities and that the requirement to hold formal meetings of the IFSG had therefore gradually diminished.

- 15 Members noted the progress made in embedding the work of the IFSG into day-to-day business, but wished to postpone any decision regarding formal meetings of the IFSG until after they had received the report detailing its work and achievements.

INFORMATION

- 16 A report detailing progress against the 27 Objectives in the IFSG's Improvement Strategy 2019-22 is attached at Appendix 1.
- 17 Further work will be completed by Officers at the start of the next financial year to check and confirm to the Service Leadership Team that the areas covered by the IFSG objectives and that are continuous in nature are fully reflected in Service policies, procedures and/or plans.

IMPLICATIONS

Well-being Objectives	Initiatives developed through the IFSG are inherent to maintaining a suitably resilient, skilled, professional and flexible workforce (Well-being Objective 5).
Budget	None identified.
Legal	Helps ensure compliance with relevant equalities and human rights legislation.
Staffing	None identified.
Equalities/Human Rights/Welsh Language	Helps ensure compliance with relevant equalities and human rights legislation and aligns with the Service's Core Values.
Risks	That areas covered by the objectives of the IFSG improvement strategy 2019-22 are found to have not been sufficiently reflected in Service policies, procedures or plans.



Gwasanaeth Tân ac Achub
Fire and Rescue Service

North Wales Fire and Rescue Inclusive Fire Service Group

Improvement Strategy
April 2019 to March 2022

Progress Report

Objective 1: Embed inclusivity into every aspect of the Fire and Rescue Service.

Planned actions:

- IFSG members to act as Champions for inclusive initiatives, engaging with colleagues to promote the work of the group and championing individual characteristics.
- IFSG meetings to be held at different locations to increase awareness of the group's work and encourage participation from invited members at outlying stations and departments.

Progress in 2019/20

IFSG members pledged to act as Equality, Diversity and Inclusivity Champions, with some championing individual characteristics (LGBT, LGBT Allies, and Disability).

Training Needs Analysis highlighted need for training packages on unconscious bias, cultural awareness and the benefits of an inclusive workforce.

Progress in 2020/21

IFSG promoted to staff via Weekly Brief as a response to global protests against racism. Staff reminded of the Service's commitment to embrace inclusion, reject racism and challenge discrimination and inequality. Black History Month supported to celebrate the achievements and contributions of black people world-wide.

Staff reminded that NWFRS's aim is to mainstream equality and diversity and that it is subject to both the Public Sector Equality Act 2010 and the Statutory Duties (Wales) Regulations 2011.

IFSG meetings temporarily paused during pandemic but resumed virtually. Staff informed via Weekly Brief that meetings had recommenced. October 2020 agenda included: update on Women in the Fire Service group; plans for development days in September 2021; review of IFSG's 3-year work plan; and developing a campaign programme in support of inclusive events and initiatives.

NWFRS's three-phase approach to recommencing training after pausing during pandemic included plans for additional training packages identified in the Training Needs Analysis through a combination of distance learning modules and facilitated sessions via video conferencing.

Progress in 2021/22

NWFRS supported Ramadan and publicised guidance booklet produced by the Asian Fire Service Association (AFSA) to demonstrate respect for staff from Muslim backgrounds and engage better with Muslim communities.

Decision to become corporate member of AFSA and also Women in the Fire Service UK, demonstrating commitment to an inclusive culture that supports and values all staff.

New Self Service function piloted to enable staff to log securely into their Service records to manage aspects of their own sensitive personal data directly without involving any other members of staff.

Female staff given opportunity to participate in *Women's Development Programme* aimed at helping women identify clear, practical and realistic steps to increasing self-confidence in their professional and personal lives. Head of Training and Delivery nominated as the direct point of contact.

LGBT Allies support group renamed LGBTQ+ Allies. Training in August 2021 raised awareness of gender identity and sexual diversity issues, and of establishing an inclusive working environment.

Opportunities for staff to join NFCC Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Lunch and Learn sessions.

Objective 2: Encourage members of IFSG to attend key external stakeholder events.

Planned actions:

- Encourage attendance by IFSG members at external events to broaden understanding and experience of issues relating to protected characteristics and promote diversity in local communities.
- Evaluate the appropriateness of current attendance and make recommendations for alternative attendance where necessary.

Progress in 2019/20

IFSG encouraged to attend events in 2020, but many events suspended due to the pandemic.

NWFRS represented at Cheshire FRS LGBT Conference, Chester Pride, and HeForShe launch at the Senedd.

Progress in 2020/21

Online virtual celebration of LGBTQ communities, 'Pride Inside' featured in the Weekly Brief to promote the event and encourage staff to participate and support Pride month. Opportunity extended to staff to attend the 'Choose to Challenge' on line event run for all genders by Women in the Fire Service. Four members of staff supported to attend Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service's LGBT virtual conference entitled Proud to Provide.

Temporary suspension of scheduled in-person Fire and Rescue Authority meetings due to the pandemic, but contact maintained throughout with Members, and any IFSG matters specifically with the Chair of IFSG, Cllr Sue Lloyd Williams.

Progress against the Authority's Strategic Equality Objectives reported in the Annual Performance Assessment 2019/20 published on the Authority's website in Autumn 2020.

Progress in 2021/22

Pride Month in June celebrating LGBTQ+ communities saw the Service's crest transformed with rainbow colours to show support, and the work of IFSG being highlighted to show how this Group's commitment to embracing inclusion had become firmly embedded in the Service's core values.

Objective 3: Ensure that senior management commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion agendas is clear to all personnel.

Planned action:

- Ensure that the Service is monitoring and achieving the objectives set out in the Strategic Equality Plan 2016 – 2020 and that Heads of Department are aware of the significance of failing to make the required progress in this regard.

Progress in 2019/20

All three Welsh FRs met individually with the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) to discuss its published findings on progress against the Public Sector Equality Duty. Potential for improvement identified for all-Wales Gender Pay Gap Action Plan (as well as individual action plans as appropriate). NWFRA's new Strategic Equality Plan to incorporate the EHRC's recommendation.

NWFRA's Strategic Equality Plan 2020-24 developed and approved by the Authority in March 2020.

Progress in 2020/21

Strategic Equality Plan 2020-24 published in April 2020 on the Authority's website. Due to Covid-19 the EHRC extended the deadline for meeting Public Sector Equality Duty reporting obligations for 2020/21 until October 2021.

Progress in 2021/22

Despite the extension to gender pay gap reporting deadlines, NWFRA data for 2020/21 was compiled by 4 April 2021. NWFRA also produced a discretionary supporting narrative and employer action plan during Covid-19.

The Single Equality Plan Annual Report for 2020/21 and the Employment Monitoring Report as at March 2021 have both been published on the Authority's website.

Objective 4: Continued involvement and close working with representatives from each of the Trade Unions recognised by the Service.

Planned actions:

- Ensure that all the recognised Trade Unions are invited to attend the Service's IFSG and take an active part at meetings.
- Continue to work closely with Trade Union representatives around the introduction and revision of policies and procedures ensuring that equality, diversity and inclusion are always given the appropriate consideration.

Progress in 2019/20

The Fire Brigades Union (FBU), Unison and Unite invited to attend IFSG meetings. The FBU worked closely with IFSG to refresh the Core Values.

Progress in 2020/21

HR staff worked with the FBU during the pandemic to provide an online Mindfulness course for staff. Two awareness sessions introduced Mindfulness and provided simple practices for use in daily life.

All relevant unions continued to be invited to IFSG meetings.

Progress in 2021/22

HR staff formed part of a working group to implement a pilot Lateral Flow testing regime for staff who were required to come in to work during the pandemic. The unions were briefed and involved in the implementation of testing. Initially the trial was restricted to specific departments but was broadened after the pilot was successful to include more test sites and both operational and non-operational staff.

HR staff also worked with Unison in developing management training on menopause awareness. Course designed to raise awareness of menopause symptoms and of how best to support staff.

Objective 5: Continue to review staff facilities and provisions to ensure that they are suitable and fit for purpose.

Planned actions

- Review current facilities and provisions and benchmark against what is currently in place. Where improvement is required draw up and resource a scheduled programme of work.
- Engage with under-represented staff to gain feedback on improvements that could be made to existing facilities and provisions including PPE and corporate workwear.

Progress in 2019/20

New structural firefighting PPE procured after successful collaboration of the three fire and rescue services to rigorously test manufacturers' products.

Progress in 2020/21

Temporary pause in issuing new fire kit due to the pandemic. Staff from the supplier worked closely with the Service to complete measuring. Kit tailored to the needs of all staff by providing a range of sizes plus an option of creating bespoke kit if required. Sizing resumed in August 2020 following a risk assessment and special measures to avoid spreading Covid-19. New kit delivered in October 2020 and issued to employees.

Progress in 2021/22

Public launch of the new Welsh fire kit in April. This latest generation of fire kit improves the safety and comfort of firefighters at emergencies and was selected following feedback from a broad range of firefighters trialling the kit.

The new fire kit went live in North Wales in June 2021 signifying a major investment and the culmination of months of hard work. Some of the old fire kit was kept for use by NWFRS with the remainder donated to charities supplying emergency equipment and aid to less developed countries.

Objective 6: The IFSG collectively to develop a new set of Service Core Values.

Planned action:

- The IFSG to look for best practice in other public sector and private organisations and review the Service's Core Values.

Progress in 2019/20

NWFRS's Core Values refreshed by IFSG and consulted on in September and October 2019. Seventy-two responses received from staff, with 78% supporting the proposed set.

Final version approved, together with an internal communication plan to support and enable embedding of the refreshed Core Values in December 2019.

Progress in 2020/21

The revised Core Values used when reviewing the Standards of Conduct and associated policies.

Posters and a screen saver for staff computer screens provided to raise awareness of the refreshed Core Values. Relevant documentation updated with the new Core Values e.g. recruitment literature.

The importance of the Core Values highlighted during the pandemic in that they were used to reaffirm the Service's commitment to embracing inclusion, particularly as the virus risked increasing inequalities, demonstrating the need to stand together in the name of fairness and equality.

Progress in 2021/22

The 25th anniversary of the formation of NWFRS was used to remind staff about the Core Values being integral to everything the Service does as the Service looks towards the future.

Objective 7: Ensure that all employees are aware of, and understand procedures relating to: grievances, discipline, anti-bullying and harassment, dignity at work, equality and attendance management.

Planned actions:

- Continue to provide the appropriate level of information to all staff as part of the Service's established induction process.
- Continue to review current procedures and update in line with best practice, legislative updates and employee feedback.
- Continue to use the Service's intranet site to draw attention to any changes in procedure.
- Design and roll out a training session aimed at supervisory managers which outlines their responsibilities when applying these procedures.

Progress in 2019/20

Review of the standards of conduct policy to incorporate the policies listed above as other relevant sources for all staff.

Plans for appointing a Policy Development Manager to ensure consistency, streamline processes and simplify procedural direction.

Induction packs updated to include refreshed Core Values.

Progress in 2020/21

Policies reviewed in accordance with stated timescales. Standards of Conduct policy refreshed along with grievance, capability and discipline as part of a broader review aimed at simplifying the policies for ease of use.

Flexibility to normal absence and attendance procedures during the pandemic in recognition of Covid-19 restrictions preventing some treatments. Also, sick pay was not reduced in order to support employees.

Progress in 2021/22

Covid-19 related absences disregarded for attendance management triggers.

External mediators used to assist with conflict coaching and mediation as required.

Consideration given to an interim HR structure to enable a designated Senior HR Adviser to deal with conflict management as part of their remit.

Line Managers invited to awareness-raising sessions on the menopause as part of dignity at work.

Core Values included in all recruitment literature. The inclusion of the Core Values in presentations by candidates at interviews for promotion regarded as confirming that they are now embedded.

Objective 8: Provide a broader suite of training around management skills which will better equip our staff to manage diverse teams and promote an inclusive culture.

Planned actions:

- Undertake a gap analysis around current management training provision.
- Explore the options currently available and identify which would best meet the requirements of each managerial level within the organisation, based on the results of the gap analysis.
- Arrange the roll out and subsequent evaluation of that training.

Progress in 2019/20

Learning opportunities developed as part of planning to better equip leaders for future positions within the Service through internal masterclasses, external providers and experiential learning including attendance at meetings/events. These opportunities to be used after appraisals or as part of progression plans designed to meet individual needs.

Progress in 2020/21

Training paused for a period during the pandemic, although some elements were undertaken remotely. Positive feedback also received from those involved in ADC assessments undertaken virtually.

Masterclass activities for 'Future Leaders' cohort progressed, with subjects including the requirements of a corporate officer and communications. Also training sessions provided on managing teams remotely. Development planning for 'managing difficult situations' and aiming to reinvigorate a coaching and mentoring strategy and associated training.

Progress in 2021/22

Opportunities for completing ILM Level 3 and level 5 qualifications remotely. Focus on preparing individuals for career progression through experiential learning prior to undertaking supervisory and middle management roles. Additional leadership and management modules as part of CPD or personal development pathway programmes.

Objective 9: As an organisation continue to challenge bullying and harassment at all levels.

Planned action:

- Senior managers should lead by positive example and should continue to challenge bullying and harassment behaviours at every level.

Progress in 2019/20

Managers encouraged to become ambassadors or champions of the White Ribbon campaign. Plans to reinforce appropriate behaviours, dealing with conflict and having difficult conversations through the masterclasses that were being developed.

Progress in 2020/21

Claims of bullying and harassment continued to be dealt with in accordance with policies and procedures during the pandemic, conducting interviews and investigations via videoconferencing to avoid delay and support the wellbeing of those concerned. This also aligned to updated ACAS guidance.

Learning from investigations or disciplinary processes identified the need for local line managers to be better equipped to resolve situations at an earlier stage before they escalate. Training in managing difficult situations to include elements of mediation and should assist in recognising and challenging unacceptable behaviours in the very early stages.

Progress in 2021/22

Any claims of bullying and harassment investigated as appropriate in accordance with Service policy. Mediation undertaken as necessary by either internal or external mediators.

Consideration given to an interim HR structure to enable a designated Senior HR Adviser to deal with conflict management as part of their remit.

Objective 10: A culture where challenge is accepted and welcomed as a positive contribution. This should work in both directions.

Planned action:

- Continue with the ongoing programme of Station visits, allowing staff the opportunity to engage directly and constructively with senior managers.

Progress in 2019/20

Principal Officer programme of station and departmental visits to encourage engagement and questioning of Service policies, processes and procedures.

Progress in 2020/21

Transition Cell established to identify new ways of working and streamlining activities and processes in the wake of the pandemic. Input and feedback requested on agile working, including through a survey questionnaire to help shape the eventual policy which centred on a blended approach to agile working post-pandemic. The Integrated Impact Assessment identified benefits for carers, improved work-life balance and would support positive action.

Live Workplace Facebook sessions undertaken to enable employees to ask questions of senior managers directly in terms of decisions taken and plans in place relating to the pandemic e.g. the reintroduction of training.

Advice line established for staff to ask questions or raise concerns directly during the pandemic. Calls from employees contributed to updating an FAQ document for reference.

Covid-19 learning project established to draw together learning from this unprecedented period to help inform how the Service will work in the future.

Progress in 2021/22

Engagement between the new Chief Fire Officer and all staff through face to face and virtual meetings to obtain feedback and listen to staff views about the future direction of the Service. Two-way communication regarded as key to working together effectively.

Participants in the High Potential programme encouraged to engage in observing key meetings as part of their development and progression plans. Feedback obtained following their attendance.

Evaluation forms drafted in relation to fitness training and recruitment processes to obtain feedback from participants to support organisational learning.

Virtual departmental/station visits undertaken by Senior HR Advisers to exchange information, advice and guidance.

Advice line maintained for staff to ask questions or raise concerns directly during the pandemic and FAQ document updated as necessary to ensure that staff had up-to-date advice and guidance.

Objective 11: Ensure that all reported cases of bullying continue to be dealt with appropriately.

Planned actions:

- Arrange appropriate initial and refresher training for all staff at the appropriate level to deal with discipline and grievance cases.
- Continue to fully investigate all reported cases of bullying and harassment.

Progress in 2019/20

All informal and formal grievances, and bullying and harassment cases logged and reported accordingly (i.e. in the Strategic Equality Plan annual monitoring report).

Progress in 2020/21

Reported cases of bullying and harassment logged and dealt with appropriately and included in the Strategic Equality Plan monitoring reports.

Employees who have been identified as high potential have received 'HR masterclass' training which incorporates dealing with discipline, grievance and bullying providing opportunities to participate in role-playing and put their skills into practice.

Progress in 2021/22

All grievances, and bullying and harassment cases dealt with in accordance with Service policy and procedures. Interventions such as mediation or conflict coaching utilised as appropriate. HR staff continued to support managers with ongoing issues and advise accordingly.

Objective 12: Ensure that staff who undertakes voluntary roles are given the necessary training to undertake these roles.

Planned Actions

- Provide additional learning opportunities for members of staff who undertake additional roles of Critical Incident Debriefing, Colleague Support, Blue Light Champions, IFSG, LGBTQ+ Staff and Allies, White Ribbon Champions and Ambassadors
- Empower those staff to make a greater difference in their own places of work.

Progress in 2019/20

Process of providing additional learning opportunities ongoing - regular meetings and training needs identified, appropriate courses programmed yearly with the relevant groups.

Progress in 2020/21

Assistance provided to support WAST as ambulance drivers. Staff volunteered to undertake this work and received intensive training associated with the role.

Work between Training and Development and Professional and Service Standards departments to ensure training aligned to Health Safety and Welfare requirements whilst working within the confines of the pandemic.

Welfare Cell established to provide ongoing support to staff and families during the pandemic. Additional need identified for Critical Incident Debriefing and Colleague Support, planned for 2021.

Progress in 2021/22

Regular updates and communication provided to staff undertaking additional roles. Training Needs Analysis completed to identify further training for these staff.

LGBT Allies support group renamed LGBTQ+ Allies. Training in August 2021 raised awareness of gender identity and sexual diversity issues, and of establishing an inclusive working environment.

A number of individual policies and guidance documents reviewed and collated into a single Employee Wellbeing Support Guidance document.

Online LGBTQ+ Awareness session arranged for existing and newly appointed champions.

Objective 13: Continue with the use of mediators to prevent escalation of issues.

Planned Action:

- Review the Service's use of internal mediators and consider if the use of external mediators would be of benefit to the Service on occasion.

Progress in 2019/20

This is ongoing – use of internally trained and external mediators (i.e. ACAS).

Progress in 2020/21

ACAS mediators utilised as necessary to assist with departmental conflict. In addition, internally trained mediators have also been deployed to assist with issues between employees.

Mediation offered to those involved in disciplinary investigations, grievances and claims of bullying and harassment.

The review of the discipline and grievance policies includes the use of mediation as a standard part of the process.

Progress in 2021/22

Mediation and conflict management offered to staff as appropriate. The Service makes use of ACAS and other external providers as a standard part of the process.

Objective 14: National advertisement campaign for the FRS

Planned Actions:

- National media campaign covering the full range of the modern firefighter role.
- Website to include information on recruitment including the selection process.

Progress in 2019/20

On-call national campaign has been adopted and utilised for ongoing recruitment. Use of documentation/videos from NFCC Facebook portal with regard to updated campaigns.

At FBU NJC IFSG workshop (in January) members attending advocated the production of a national campaign promoting the role of a wholetime firefighter (to include all diversity intersectionality). No further details have emerged from the NJC/FBU IFSG but the National Fire Chiefs Council ED&I Scoping Group met in London in January to progress an ED&I Strategy along with Terms of Reference that was to be taken to the People Programme Board in April for approval.

Progress in 2020/21

National advertisement campaign delayed due to the pandemic. A review of recruitment literature and website content undertaken to ensure that it was accurate and reflected an inclusive workforce.

Recruitment of on-call firefighters paused for a period during the pandemic. Once recommenced, virtual taster days and positive action days held to attract applicants. Regular updates provided to candidates whilst recruitment on hold. Over 127 new registrations completed during this period.

First virtual open day held via the official Facebook page. This also provided opportunities to promote careers in the Fire and Rescue Service.

Private Facebook group established to assist potential candidates and provide them with fitness advice and information.

The NFCC ED&I Strategy approved. NWFRS participation in virtual work streams to reflect the statutory requirements in Wales.

Progress in 2021/22

Positive action events held for under-represented groups within the Service prior to a recruitment campaign for wholetime firefighters, encouraging potential applicants that 'there is no such thing as a typical firefighter'.

Fitness team involved in positive action days/events to give potential recruits for firefighter roles a better insight into the fitness standards required. 30-minute fitness films produced to help people to improve their fitness prior to applying.

Response sent to survey by the National NJC IFSG in December 2019 fed into national report NJC/2/21 – Inclusive Fire Service Group Report | Fire Brigades Union (fbu.org.uk)

Objective 15: Explore, and where appropriate utilise, recruitment opportunities such as apprenticeships and cadets to increase diversity in the workforce.

Planned Actions:

- Develop a programme of routine engagement with fire cadets around potential recruitment opportunities into the Service.
- Explore the potential of introducing an apprenticeship programme for operational roles.

Progress in 2019/20

Taster days held specifically for potential female firefighters at Rhyl Community Fire Station. "Get Fire Fit" digital adverts posted online to target underrepresented groups. Wholetime recruitment campaign emphasised the importance of a diverse workforce. Positive action led to being able to recruit equal numbers of men and women, all meeting the requisite standards, and a good representation of people of different backgrounds, disability status and sexual orientation. Firefighter and Future Leadership Apprenticeships launched.

Progress in 2020/21

Following a delayed process for interviewing applicants for apprentice roles practical sessions undertaken with Covid-19 measures in place. Assessments paused due to restrictions on undertaking medicals. Recommended recruitment process with interviews undertaken remotely. Apprentice firefighters and Business Fire Safety apprentices appointed into substantive roles following their apprenticeship programmes.

Eight people selected to fill wholetime firefighter posts through a random selection process from a holding list from the 2019 recruitment process. All eight are male, and five are fluent Welsh speakers.

Engagement with Fire Cadets, including a virtual presentation about careers and roles in the fire and rescue sector which may help them decide about their school choices and academic study routes.

Recommended apprenticeship processes included data capture to assist analysis to improve future processes in terms of attracting greater diversity of applicants.

Progress in 2021/22

Two cohorts of new apprentices appointed (diverse characteristics).

Footage shared of crews joining in with fitness team to create motivational workout ideas for staff and potential applicants. Videos posted to 'Get Fire Fit' Facebook pages to target potential applicants and help with improving fitness levels.

Apprenticeship opportunities extended to include non-operational roles such as Finance. Future Leaders and apprentice firefighters following development pathway programmes. Positive Action Days reintroduced after successful advertisement campaigns.

Temporary suspension of wholetime recruitment and positive action days in order to prioritise recruitment of on-call firefighters. Proactive campaign focused on attracting underrepresented groups.

Cadet Programme re-invigorated: branches returned to face-to-face meetings.

Objective 16: Continue to undertake greater and early engagement with specific communities/schools/colleges and not just when recruitment is on the horizon. This would further reinforce understanding of the role as it is today and should utilise employee role models whilst being careful to maintain a balance with their core work.

Planned Actions:

- Make connections with local colleges offering public services courses, with a view to engaging more widely and on a more regular basis.
- Develop a standardised toolkit for this type of engagement to ensure that a consistent and inclusive message is delivered at every opportunity.
- Periodically review the toolkit in line with feedback gathered after each session.
- Periodically review the number and location of colleges attended.

Progress in 2019/20

NWFRS awarded one of three prizes for the Best Stand Award at the Skills Cymru careers event for the interactive nature of the stand and the positive engagement with attendees.

Progress in 2020/21

Scheduled events affected by school closures during the pandemic. Skills Cymru event postponed and rescheduled for later in 2021.

Work undertaken on virtual open-day presentations adapted for school use. General recruitment video produced about careers and roles in the fire and rescue service. Facebook Live presentation to raise awareness of careers and roles in the Service.

Work recommenced with younger audiences - educationalists reconnected with schools through virtual presentations. Online bonfire and firework safety quizzes well received by schools.

Virtual open day by Jobcentre provided opportunity to establish links with apprenticeship panels/groups and inclusivity groups to promote careers in the fire and rescue service.

Progress in 2021/22

Support shown for Armed Forces Week and Reservists Day, linking in with the Service's commitment to the Armed Forces Covenant.

NWFRS honoured with a Silver Employer Recognition Scheme Award from the Ministry of Defence.

Preparations made to resume events to promote careers in the fire and rescue service.

Objective 17: Fire and Rescue Services should ensure they have visible family friendly working policies supported by a greater use of flexible working arrangements.

Planned Actions:

- Review the Work and Family and Flexible Working Hours Procedures and produce a more 'user friendly' series of toolkits which meets the requirements of both staff and their line managers. Ensure that, once approved, these are widely publicised so that all staff are aware of their contents.
- Encourage Heads of Department and Line Managers to fully consider any requests made under these procedures, and explore workable alternatives where they are unable to approve the initial proposal.

Progress in 2019/20

Carers and Bereavement policies updated. Gap analysis of recent government legislation on the Good Work Plan.

Progress in 2020/21

Temporary amendments to the flexi-time policy to help staff to manage conflicting demands during the pandemic e.g. caring responsibilities and home schooling. Some restrictions on core hours removed and staff supported to adjust their working patterns temporarily to suit their individual circumstances. Opportunities for longer-term flexibility identified e.g. agile working.

Bereavement policies updated to include legislative changes for parental bereavement leave. Sympathetic approach taken to staff experiencing bereavement during the pandemic, including difficulties in respect of arrangements etc.

Website content reviewed to advertise flexible working/flexi-time as a benefit of working for the Service. Adverts updated to include reference to agile working in accordance with the Service's approach to working more flexibly in future.

Support for flexi-retirement enabling staff to undertake job share when approaching retirement.

Progress in 2021/22

Staff involved in a consultation on agile working to be implemented once Covid-19 restrictions have been lifted. Agile Working Policy and Procedure produced. Three staff surveys undertaken to obtain feedback from staff. Implementation plan devised to ensure that consideration given to all relevant aspects. Service invited to offer advice and guidance to other public sector bodies to help support them implement agile working in their own organisations.

Objective 18: Fire and Rescue Services should develop an internal communications strategy to explain the difference between positive action and positive discrimination

Planned Actions:

- Develop an internal communications strategy to explain the difference between positive action and positive discrimination to counteract the view of some that an individual has only been employed/promoted because they are female/BME/LGBT.
- Encourage each of the Representative Bodies to support the Service's work in this regard to re-enforce the message.

Progress in 2019/20

Graphics created to illustrate this and shared widely with staff. Links also provided to further information.

Progress in 2020/21

Additional information included on NWFRS website and in recruitment literature.

Progress in 2021/22

Positive Action events held for recruitment campaigns with e.g. videos via social media channels to demonstrate the Service's commitment to recruiting a workforce reflective of the community it serves. Further information provided about Positive Action events and highlighting that positive action does not guarantee employment to those involved and all offers of employment will be made on merit.

Updated positive action promotional literature produced in advance of Positive Action days to provide greater clarity on the purpose of positive action days and who the events were aimed at.

Objective 19: The Group should review the statistical data from all recruitment to ensure continued improvement.

Planned Actions:

- Survey all applicants from under-represented groups who take part in whole-time and on-call.
- Compare the data obtained from that survey with that collated from previous applicants and highlight any potential correlation.
- Provide the Inclusive Workforce Group with a combined analysis from the campaigns along with a breakdown of key themes and recommendations.

Progress in 2019/20

This action undertaken at meetings of the Operational Resourcing Group and the On Call Process Improvement Group.

Progress in 2020/21

Statistics recorded in relation to those candidates remaining in the recruitment process (physical stage) when it was paused due to Covid-19 restrictions.

The Service has seen an increase in the diversity of candidates at all stages of the process, demonstrating that the Service's positive action is having a positive impact.

Progress in 2021/22

Work undertaken to provide regular data reports on workforce Welsh language skills in order to monitor performance more closely and flag up areas of achievement and areas for improvement.

Objective 20: Fire and Rescue Services should ensure that promotion processes which are fair and transparent are applied consistently and clearly explained to all employees.

Planned Actions:

- Continue to gather data around those entering into, and successfully completing the Service's promotion processes, and highlight any potential issues as and when appropriate.
- Undertake and review the Equality Impact Assessments for each stage of the promotion processes, and take the appropriate action if any issues are identified.
- Ensure that all personnel are aware of the requirements of each stage of the promotion process and can identify which process they need to enter into, in accordance with their current circumstances.

Progress in 2019/20

Work undertaken to support and encourage more women to engage in promotions processes. Every promotion process this year considered Equality Impact but did not identify detrimental equality issues other than the low number of female applicants. Future processes expected to benefit from recent successes in recruiting more female firefighters than ever before, and further bolstered by higher proportion of women applying for apprenticeships.

Progress in 2020/21

The pandemic delayed promotional processes for operational roles in 2020/21, with several staff members in occupying temporary positions. Numbers of women progressing through both permanent and temporary promotions remained low, but was directly proportionate to the low numbers in the workforce. However, an increase observed in the number of women engaging with Technical Tests and the ADC process, indicating a growing interest in progression into more senior positions.

Progress in 2021/22

Review of the promotions process commenced. Staff concerns addressed and criteria for temporary promotions agreed in principle and piloted. Watch Manager and Crew Manager promotions process undertaken in September 2021.

Objective 21: Fire and Rescue Services should develop meaningful mentor/coaching programmes.

Planned Actions:

- Review the Equality Impact Assessments for each stage of the current coaching and mentoring programme, and take the appropriate remedial action if any issues are identified.
- Increase awareness among staff of the existing coaching and mentoring programme and how to access support.
- Provide an annual report to the Inclusive Workforce Group on the level of interest in the Service's coaching and mentoring initiatives, broken down by protected characteristic.

Progress in 2019/20

Coaching and Mentoring introduction courses provided through English and Welsh sessions.

Progress in 2020/21

Bespoke training packages offered to those experiencing specific development needs e.g. maintaining a customer-focus, people management skills.

Coaching and Mentoring strategy being developed, but some delays in its roll-out to the workforce.

Progress in 2021/22

Opportunities sought for individuals to undertake ILM Level 3 and Level 5 Coaching and Mentoring qualifications with local education providers.

One day "Coaching Skills for Managers" courses programmed in for 2022.

The Coaching and Mentoring Strategy factored in as a key element of the Training and Development Plan 2022/23 objectives.

Objective 22: Fire and Rescue Services should encourage interest in promotion in general and through talent spotting by including leadership training, opportunities for development such as job swaps, taster weeks and acting-up/temporary promotion (so that an individual can experience the different role). This should be underpinned by a fair and transparent policy which sets out clearly the criteria by which such opportunities will be offered.

Planned Actions:

- Refresh the procedural Guidance Document around internal promotion to ensure that all staff is clear around eligibility and process.
- Draft a Procedural Guidance document for the Service's Leadership Pathways to ensure that staff are clear on how these can be accessed.
- Encourage interest in promotion opportunities across the Service via a series of local roadshows.
- Continue to develop staff using our current Leadership programmes as well as utilising opportunities to act/up or undertake a temporary promotion.
- Review the Equality Impact Assessments for both the new Leadership Pathways PGD and revised Development and Progression PGD, and take the appropriate remedial action of any issues are identified.

Progress in 2019/20

Leadership pathways being updated on an all Wales basis. These pathways are drafted and are underpinned by continuous development, rather than Assessment centres.

Measures taken to publicise and provide pre-technical test sessions attracted more applicants to the supervisory manager technical test - 49 applicants, of which 8 were women.

Progress in 2020/21

High Potential programme introduced to support succession planning. Those employees identified as having high potential provided with bespoke training and opportunities to help them achieve their future potential.

All High Potential candidates took part in 'style insights' assessments to identify their strengths and weaknesses, with an individual progression plan drawn up to help address areas of relative weaknesses.

Progress in 2021/22

Working group given the task of reviewing the promotional process and developing an associated policy. This process implemented and recruitment processes ongoing.

Evaluation undertaken and feedback sought from individuals completing the Leadership and Management Apprenticeship.

Objective 23: Fire and Rescue Services should ensure that expectations around fitness levels are clearly explained, and support provided, including the potential impact of female only issues such as maternity or the menopause.

Planned Actions:

- Ensure that any changes to the existing fitness testing procedure are widely publicised and brought to the attention of all staff.
- Ensure that appropriate support is made available to individuals who fail to meet the required standard during employment, and takes cognisance of the effect of issues such as maternity and the menopause.

Progress in 2019/20

Appropriate and tailored fitness programmes made available to all employees as and when required.

Progress in 2020/21

Eligible employees encouraged to take up the offer of a free NHS flu vaccine to help protect themselves and others. Vouchers issued for employees to use at participating pharmacies.

Occupational Health (OH) medicals recommenced apart from asbestos medicals and OH Practitioner face-to-face medicals, but periodic and pre-employment medicals recommenced in 2020 with the spirometry and Chester Step test elements recommencing January 2021.

There was a backlog of fitness testing due to Covid-19 restrictions. Fitness tests resumed in November 2020 and the backlog cleared by September 2021.

Progress in 2021/22

Wellness Wednesday and Fitness Friday virtual workout sessions relaunched for staff.

Staff reminded of the importance of fitness testing after changes introduced in accordance with NFCC guidelines. Staff also encouraged to take advantage the specialist advice and information available through the Service's Health, Fitness and Wellbeing team.

Occupational Health confirmed that with effect from 1 September 2021 HSE guidance permitted asbestos medicals to recommence. Face-to-face appointments with the OH doctor undertaken on a case-by-case basis if there was a clinical need.

Eligible employees again encouraged to take up the offer of a free NHS flu vaccine to help protect themselves and others against seasonal flu. Employees who were not eligible for an NHS vaccination could book and purchase a flu vaccination at a local participating pharmacy and the Service would reimburse the cost.

Objective 24: As with recruitment and progression, Fire and Rescue Services should explore greater use of flexible working arrangements.

Planned Action:

- Evaluate the options available to Grey Book staff for further flexible working.

Progress in 2019/20

The Service adopted a flexible working approach for employees requesting to work different rotas/shifts/hours to accommodate their family lifestyle.

Progress in 2020/21

Grey Book staff worked from home wherever possible during the Covid-19 pandemic. This was enabled using video conferencing facilities. Agile working proved successful and consideration was given to implementing this way of working on a more long-term basis. Flexibility afforded to those Grey Book employees with childcare/caring responsibilities during the pandemic and changes made to accommodate individual needs.

Progress in 2021/22

The implementation of agile working within the Service incorporates Grey Book roles as appropriate enabling flexibility in terms of work location. Flexibility is also afforded to Grey Book staff in terms of attendance at meetings on a virtual basis.

Objective 25: Fire and Rescue Services should consider how best to maintain the interest and commitment of employees through the variety of the work undertaken within the role.

Planned Actions:

- Ensure that enough development opportunities are available at Firefighter level to ensure that those who do not wish to seek promotion continue to be developed and remain committed to the organisation.
- Continue to review the content of operational roles across duty systems to ensure that all personnel can undertake a variety of work.

Progress in 2019/20

Part of the new Pathways work that was being developed provided opportunities for staff to develop and progress 'horizontally' as well as 'vertically'.

Plans developing to provide opportunities for staff to experience a variety of different types of work in a range of internal departments.

Progress in 2020/21

The pandemic limited opportunities for continuous development at firefighter level, but plans were being developed for when training could recommence.

Meanwhile, several opportunities presented themselves for individuals to get involved with project work in a range of disciplines.

Progress in 2021/22

Future Leaders and apprentice firefighters commencing their secondments to departments in line with the 2021/22 development pathway programme.

Focus placed on actively upskilling individuals to improve the Service's availability and response capabilities.

Department Heads through the appraisal system proactively seeking opportunities for individuals to develop and take on additional responsibilities.

Middle and Supervisory Management engagement seminars held with Strategic Management personnel.

Objective 26: The Service demonstrates that they intend to change the way people think and act about mental health in the work place.

Planned Actions:

- Commit to training Mental Health Champions to be equipped to support and encourage staff to talk about their mental health at work.
- Talking can make a real difference to the workplace culture and to the lives of colleagues, working with the organisation. Make mental health a normal topic of conversation, dispelling myths and making it easier for people to seek support.

Progress in 2019/20

A Mental Health Awareness week programme was designed and staff were encouraged to take part in various activities throughout the week.

Health and Wellbeing Day held in Rhyl Community Fire Station. The purpose of the day was to provide staff with an opportunity to learn more about their physical activity levels, nutrition and management of good mental health through mindfulness - all leading to a fit and healthy lifestyle.

Progress in 2020/21

A very wide range of supportive materials, interventions, advice, guidance and programmed sessions provided to help sustain staff wellbeing during the height of the pandemic.

Progress in 2021/22

MIND's Blue Light programme returned in response to the pandemic with the Firefighters Charity, Ambulance Service and Police Care UK working together to support mental health of emergency services staff and volunteers. Activities aimed at ensuring the importance of mental health and highlighting that support is available when it is needed.

Stress Awareness Month supported by the Service demonstrating its commitment to helping staff maintain a healthy body and mind through signposting to a range of mental health advice and support and tackling the social stigma related to mental health.

The Calon Fund was launched to provide support services to complement those offered by the Service, including emotional, physical, social and financial support.

Mindfulness sessions and live fitness sessions shared virtually with staff, recognising the link between physical activity and mental health.

Options for other types of staff support (e.g. financial wellbeing education) being explored too.

Objective 27: Work toward re-validation of the Corporate Health Gold and Platinum Awards.

Planned Actions:

Gold Award

- Organisational support – How sustainable employee health and well-being is influenced through the ethos and culture of the business/organisation and its leadership process.
- Specific health issues – The management of the key preventable ill-health issues in the workplace. The Corporate Health Standard is valid for three years. Employers can also apply to re-validate their existing award after three years.

Platinum Award

- The Platinum level recognises responsible employers who demonstrate an organisational commitment to support not only their employees, but also other employers and the local community.

Progress in 2019/20

Platinum – Public Health Adviser appointed to assist the Service with the Platinum submission. Working group meetings being held to plan for assessment day.

Gold - Positive feedback received from Public Health Wales in relation to the Action Plan for the Gold Award. Work commenced to produce a video to engage with employees- demonstrating all health and wellbeing initiatives available.

Progress in 2020/21

Platinum – Mock assessment date booked but had to be postponed due to the pandemic and lockdown restrictions.


Gold - Mock assessment undertaken, minor issues raised and addressed and date set for the assessment. However, the assessment had to be postponed due to the pandemic and lockdown restrictions.

Progress in 2021/22

Corporate Health articles a regular feature of Y Fflam and the Weekly Brief demonstrating an ongoing commitment to the Award. Workplace Health introduced a new interim virtual status of check due to the pandemic to give workplaces a 12-month extension to the Corporate Health Award so that the level of Corporate Health Standard already attained by the workplace did not lapse.

Gold – Interim gold status check successfully completed in February 2021.

Platinum – Interim platinum status check successfully completed in May 2021. A full assessment will be required by May 2022.

Report to	North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority	
Date	14 March 2022	
Lead Officer	Helen MacArthur, Assistant Chief Fire Officer	
Contact Officer	Helen Howard, Head of Finance	
Subject	Financial Regulations	

PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1 The purpose of this report is to present the Financial Regulations, attached at appendix 1, for approval.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 2 The Constitution of the North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority (the Authority) sets out the arrangements for decision making and ensures transparency and accountability. The Financial Regulations are contained within the Constitution and provide the governance framework for financial matters.
- 3 The Financial Regulations (the Regulations) have been reviewed and revised to ensure that the Authority complies with the CIPFA Financial Management Code.

OBSERVATIONS BY THE AUDIT COMMITTEE

- 4 This report was presented to the Audit Committee on 24 January. Members of the Audit Committee recommended the revised Financial Regulations for approval by the Fire and Rescue Authority.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- 5 Members are asked to approve the Financial Regulations.

BACKGROUND

- 5 The Authority is required to make proper arrangements to demonstrate that:
 - business is conducted in accordance with all relevant laws and regulations;
 - public money is safeguarded and properly accounted for ; and
 - resources are used economically, efficiently and effectively to achieve agreed priorities which benefit local people.

- 6 The CIPFA Financial Management code also requires authorities to have robust financial arrangements in place and confirms that the financial regulations are pivotal to achieving this.
- 7 These Regulations, therefore, provide the governance framework which sets out how the Authority manages its finances and underpins all financial decision making.

INFORMATION

- 8 The overall purpose of these Regulations is to provide sound arrangements for internal financial management, accounting and control. Operation of these Regulations promotes value for money and compliance with the Authority's legal and financial obligations.
- 9 The proposed Regulations are set out in Appendix 1. These have been reviewed and revised to ensure that they are consistent with the current operating environment of the Authority and provide a comprehensive mechanism for the management of financial risk.

IMPLICATIONS

Wellbeing Objectives	This report links to the Authority's long-term well-being objectives, by ensuring that financial decisions are sound, affordable and sustainable. The Regulations are designed to ensure that there is sufficient internal controls and financial management to enable the service to provide emergency responses and prevention work well in to the future.
Budget	The Regulations provides the financial government framework which governs all financial decisions.
Legal	The adherence to these Regulations supports achievement of the Authority's legal objectives.
Staffing	None
Equalities/Human Rights/Welsh Language	None
Risks	The Regulations address known risks and includes the framework of delegation for decision making.

Report to **North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority**

Date **14 March 2022**

Lead Officer **Clerk**

Contact Officer **Gareth Owens (01745 535286)**

Subject **Temporary Delegation of Powers before the Annual Meeting**



PURPOSE OF REPORT

1. To delegate powers from the end of office of the present members of the Fire and Rescue Authority to the first meeting of the Authority after the elections.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

2. Members of the Fire Authority are appointed until the elections in May 2022. There is a short period between the elections and the Annual Meeting of the Authority where there will be no office holders during which time authority to act needs to be delegated to the Chief Fire Officer in respect of decision which cannot be delayed.

RECOMMENDATIONS

3. That all the powers of the Fire and Rescue Authority, its committees and its office holders be delegated to the Chief Fire Officer, in consultation with the Clerk and Treasurer, for the period from 10 May 2022 until the first meeting of the Fire and Rescue Authority on 20 June 2022.
4. These delegations shall apply only so far as such powers relate to decisions that cannot reasonably be delayed until the date of that first meeting.

BACKGROUND

5. There are no planned Authority meetings between now and the Annual Meeting on 20 June 2022. The key strategic decisions that need to be taken by members have been taken and all operational decisions are delegated to the Chief Fire Officer. The business of the Authority and Service should therefore be able to continue until the Annual Meeting without problem. If an urgent issue arises, that requires a decision by members, between the date of this meeting and the elections the Authority can call an extraordinary meeting of the whole Authority or Executive Panel.

6. There is, however, a short interval after the elections when the Authority does not have any confirmed members or office holders (chair of the authority, chair of committees etc). Local authority elections will be held this year on 5 May 2022. Section 26(3) of the Local Government Act 1972 provides that “on the fourth day after any such ordinary election –
 - the persons who were councillors immediately before the election shall retire; and
 - the newly elected councillors shall assume office.”
7. Therefore, councillors continue in office until first thing on Tuesday 10 May 2022 when the newly elected councillors take office.
8. In the same way the present Fire and Rescue Authority members remain in office until 10 May 2022, but the date of their replacement depends on how quickly the county and county borough councils make appointments in accordance with articles 12 and 13 of the combination order. Such appointments will not necessarily be made at the first meetings of the new councils, particularly if the appointments are executive functions delegated to cabinets.
9. The term of office of all members is to the elections in May 2022. Therefore, even if the present Chair and Deputy Chair were re-elected as councillors and were re-appointed to the Fire and Rescue Authority by their councils, they cannot assume or resume any office with the Fire and Rescue Authority unless the Fire and Rescue Authority itself so resolves at its meeting on 20 June 2022. Similar restrictions apply to members of the Executive Panel, Audit Committee and to the two Authority members who serve on the Standards Committee.
10. Thus, between Tuesday 10 May and the annual meeting, scheduled for Monday 20 June, there is no arrangement in place for any decisions that would normally fall to elected members to be taken by them.

INFORMATION

Advice

11. An appropriate delegation needs to be put in place to cover the interregnum so that any decision that would normally fall to members - and cannot reasonably be delayed until the first meeting of the Fire and Rescue Authority after the elections in May - can be dealt with. The delegation would cover all powers vested in members, including those exercised by the Executive Panel and the Chair and Deputy Chair.

12. It would be inappropriate for such a delegation to confer any decision-making powers solely on a councillor or councillors because there is no guarantee that any of the existing members will be re-elected as councillors and re-appointed to the Fire and Rescue Authority.

IMPLICATIONS

Wellbeing Objectives	The delegation will enable the Authority to continue to contribute towards its well being objectives
Budget	No additional cost over and above the existing allocated budget
Legal	The recommendation will enable the Authority to make lawful decisions until new Members are appointed
Staffing	Not considered relevant
Equalities/Human Rights/Welsh Language	No direct implications arising out of the recommendation
Risks	The delegation will enable the Authority to manage any unforeseen emergency until new Members are appointed