

**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 16 DECEMBER 2019 at CONWY COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL CHAMBER, BODLONDEB, CONWY, LL32 8DU at 10.30am.**

Yours faithfully

Colin Everett  
Clerk

**AGENDA**

- 1. Apologies**
- 2. Declarations of Interest**
- 3. Notice of Urgent Matters**  
Notice of items which, in the opinion of the Chair, should be considered at the meeting as a matter of urgency pursuant to Section 100B (4) of the Local Government Act, 1972.
- 4. Minutes of the Meeting held on 16 September 2019**
- 5. Matters Arising**
- 6. Chair's Report**
- 7. Provisional Outturn 2019/20**
- 8. Medium Term Financial Strategy 2020/23 and Budget 2020/21**
- 9. Improvement and Well-being Plan 2020/21**
- 10. Membership of the Authority's Planning Working Group to develop the Fire and Rescue Authority's plan for 2021/22**
- 11. Meeting Dates 2020/21**
- 12. WG Plans for Reform of Governance of FRAs in Wales (verbal report)**
- 13. Public Services Boards' Update**

**14. Biodiversity and the Environment Wales Act 2016**

**15. Members' Register of Interests and Related Party Transactions (verbal report)**

**16. Urgent Matters**

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

**PART II**

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

**None.**

Report to	<b>North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority</b>
Date	<b>16 December 2019</b>
Lead Officer	<b>Not applicable</b>
Contact Officer	<b>Alwen Davies (01745 535286)</b>
Subject	<b>Chair's Report</b>



## **PURPOSE OF REPORT**

- 1 This report provides Members with information on the meetings and events attended by the Chair and Deputy Chair of the Authority in their official capacities between December 2018 and December 2019.

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

- 2 The Chair and/or Deputy Chair have attended numerous meetings and events during 2019, both internally and externally on behalf of the Authority.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

- 3 That Members note the information provided.

## **BACKGROUND**

- 4 Until June 2019, the Chair was Cllr Meirick Lloyd Davies and the Deputy Chair was Cllr Peter Lewis. At the annual meeting in June 2019, Cllr Peter Lewis was elected to the role of Chair and Cllr Dylan Rees elected to the role of Deputy Chair.

## **OBSERVATIONS FROM EXECUTIVE PANEL/AUDIT COMMITTEE**

- 5 This report has not previously been considered.

## **INFORMATION**

- 6 The Chair and/or Deputy Chair have attended all Authority-related meetings during the last twelve months. They have also met with the Chief Fire Officer (CFO) on a regular basis. In addition, the Chair and/or Deputy Chair have attended Phoenix achievement ceremonies across the North Wales region.

- 7 The Chair has attended meetings of the North Wales Regional Leadership Board which aims to provide strategic leadership to promote more efficient and effective public services.
  
- 8 The Chair, along with the CFO, has attended meetings in Cardiff with other Chairs and Chiefs of FRAs with the Deputy Minister for Housing and Local Government. These meetings have mainly concentrated on the Welsh Government's desire to reform the governance arrangements of FRAs in Wales and Members have been, and continue to be, kept informed of developments.

## **IMPLICATIONS**

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

Report to	<b>North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority</b>
Date	<b>16 December 2019</b>
Lead Officer	<b>Ken Finch - Treasurer</b>
Contact Officer	<b>Ken Finch (01745 535286)</b>
Subject	<b>Provisional Outturn 2019/20</b>



## PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1 To present the projected revenue and capital expenditure position, as at 30 November 2019.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 2 The Authority approved a revenue budget of £35.2m at its meeting on 17 December 2018. The forecast outturn position remains that the Authority will achieve a breakeven against this budget. A budget realignment was approved at the FRA meeting in September 2019.
- 3 The Authority approved a capital budget of £3.1m on 17 December 2018. This has been reviewed and revised to £2.1m.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4 Members are asked to note the draft revenue and capital outturn positions as detailed within the report.

## 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 2019/20 financial year.

## INFORMATION

### REVENUE BUDGET

- 7 The table below sets out the draft revenue outturn position for the 2019/20 financial year. This details a breakeven position against the budget of £35.237m.

	<b>2019/20 Budget £</b>	<b>2019/20 Projection £</b>	<b>2019/20 Variance £</b>
Employee Costs	27,176	26,933	-243
Premises	2,243	2,533	290
Transport	1,019	1,037	18
Supplies and Services	4,179	4,356	177
Third Party Payments	417	417	0
Income	-2,852	-2,862	-10
Capital Financing and Interest Charges	3,055	2,823	-232
<b>Budget requirement</b>	<b>35,237</b>	<b>35,237</b>	<b>0</b>

### Employee Costs

- 8 For the 2019/20 financial year, the employee budget is £27.271m representing 77% of net expenditure. The draft outturn forecast is an underspend position of £0.243m and relates to delays in the recruitment of apprentice firefighters. During 2019/20 it was necessary to prioritise the recruitment of whole time firefighters to address operational capacity issues. The appointment of apprentices will be prioritised for 2020/21.

### Premises

- 9 The budget for premises is £2.243m and an overspend of £0.290m is projected. Key areas of overspend include utility and refuse collection costs. Fixed wire testing is being completed at all stations and this has resulted in remedial works being required in order to comply with legislation.

### Transport

- 10 The projected expenditure for transport related costs is £1,037k which is a minor overspend. A change in legislation has resulted in the requirement to replace tyres in excess of 10 years of age on all appliances. The anticipated cost to complete this work in 2019/20 is £32,600. This will also be a budget pressure for future years.

### Supplies

- 11 The projected expenditure on supplies amounts to £4.356m which is an overspend of £0.2m against budget. This includes increased costs in relation to computer licences, computer maintenance and expenditure in relation to the Local Resilience Forum. The increased expenditure on the Local Resilience Forum is offset by additional income.

## Capital Financing

- 12 The capital financing budget is £3.055m. The capital financing costs include the charge to revenue for depreciation and also the cost of borrowing. There is an anticipated underspend of £0.232m which reflects the reductions in the 2018/19 capital programme. This forecast anticipates that interest rates will remain at their current level.

## Income

- 13 Anticipated income is broadly in line with budget at £0.5m. The income includes a claim submitted to Derbyshire Fire and Rescue Authority for assistance provided during the Whaley Bridge flooding.

## Revenue Grant Funding

- 14 A breakdown of grant funding, for 2019/20, is detailed below.

	<b>£</b>
Arson Reduction	142,529
Safe and Well Checks	223,300
Phoenix	386,549
National Resilience	141,593
Firefighters Pension Contributions	1,085,673
Firelink	415,600
<b>Total Grant Funding</b>	<b>2,395,244</b>

## CAPITAL PROGRAMME

- 15 The Authority approved a capital programme of £3.119m. The capital programme has been reviewed and amended to fully reflect projects that are planned to be delivered in year. The revised capital programme is £2.052m.

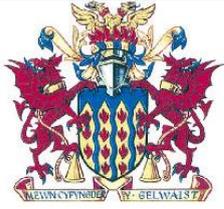
- 16 The provisional outturn for the capital programme is £1.39m.

Department	Description	2019/20	2019/20	2019/20
		Budget	Provisional Outturn	Requested Rollover
Fleet	Replacement vehicles and Equipment	£180,000	£180,000	£0
Operations/ Fleet	Equipment	£41,000	£0	£0
Facilities	Building upgrades	£878,000	£603,950	£278,000
ICT/Control	System upgrades and associated Works	£953,649	£614,385	£338,130
	<b>Total Capital</b>	<b>£2,052,649</b>	<b>£1,398,335</b>	<b>£616,130</b>

- 17 Since the programme was revised, projects have slipped in relation to Facilities due to works having to be re-tendered, and also ICT/Control which is largely due to the delay in the joint project with North Wales Police for the secondary control relocation.
- 18 It is anticipated that funding will be rolled over to 2020/21, to accommodate this slippage.

## IMPLICATIONS

Well-being Objectives	This report links to NWFRA's long-term well-being objectives. Funding for the Service benefits the communities of North Wales and ensures there is sufficient investment in infrastructure to enable the Service to provide emergency responses and prevention work well 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.

Report to	<b>Fire and Rescue Authority</b>	
Date	<b>16 December 2019</b>	
Lead Officer	<b>Treasurer</b>	
Contact Officer	<b>Ken Finch (01745 535286)</b>	
Subject	<b>Medium Term Financial Strategy 2020/23 and Budget 2020/21</b>	

## PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1 To present to Members the Medium Term Financial Strategy 2020/23 and the draft revenue and capital budgets for 2020/21.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 2 The Fire and Rescue Authority (the Authority) is required to set a balanced budget in December each year. This report sets out the draft revenue and capital budget for 2020/21 and the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS).
- 3 This report outlines the key assumptions, risks and uncertainties identified during the budget planning process. The report confirms the funding required from each constituent local authority.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4 Members are asked to:
  - (i) approve the capital and revenue budgets for 2020/21 based on an increase in contributions from constituent local authorities of £0.7m;
  - (ii) note the key risks and uncertainties identified during the budget planning process; and
  - (iii) endorse the Medium Term Financial Strategy.

## OBSERVATIONS FROM EXECUTIVE PANEL

- 5 The planning assumptions were considered and noted by the Executive Panel at its meeting of 21 October 2019.

## BACKGROUND

- 6 An effective organisation needs to have a number of corporate plans in place to ensure its overall strategic objectives are achieved. The wellbeing statement confirms the Authority's long term well-being objectives:

1. To support people to prevent accidental dwelling fires and stay safe if they do occur; and
  2. To facilitate high quality, responsive and better integrated fire and rescue services so that prevention activity and emergency response can continue to be available when and where required, affordably, equitably and on the basis of risk.
- 7 The development and approval of the MTFs supports these objectives and ensures that a strategic approach is taken towards financial planning and funding.
- 8 The Authority recognised the austerity measures necessary across the public sector and between 2010 and 2017 identified savings of £3m (10% of its budget) and reduced the workforce by 9% across all staff groups.
- 9 When considering the financial plans for 2017/18, Members realised that it was becoming unsustainable to continue to try to freeze the Authority's budget. Members, therefore, adopted a financial strategy for the period 2017/20 that sought to secure financial sustainability through utilising reserves, increased financial contributions and consideration of Service reductions.
- 10 The Authority is supported by a member led Planning Working Group. This group met on three occasions between January and March 2019 to develop recommendations for the annual Improvement and Well-being Plan for 2020/21 and the MTFs. The recommendation of the Group was for the Authority to maintain existing service delivery models and for the consultation to focus on the development and adoption of an Environmental Strategy for delivery from April 2020 onwards. The Authority accepted this recommendation and the public consultation commenced during September 2019.

## **DRAFT REVENUE AND CAPITAL BUDGET 2020/21**

- 11 Detailed budget planning work has been undertaken and the key planning assumptions, risks and uncertainties are outlined in appendix 1.
- 12 The planning process has confirmed a net expenditure requirement for 2020/21 of £35.9m which is a year on year increase of 2%. A summary by budget heading is provided within appendix 2.
- 13 The budget proposal for 2020/21 increases contributions from constituent local authorities by £0.7m. Appendix 4 provides a summary by local authority.

- 14 Employee costs account for 72% of total expenditure and the draft budget for 2020/21 is £27.7m, which assumes a pay award of 2% for all staff. As national pay awards have not yet been finalised this remains a significant planning risk. Work continues to ensure the careful management of employee costs including the implementation of improvements for the management of variable pay.
- 15 The employer contributions for the Local Government Pension Scheme has been reassessed following receipt of the tri-annual actuarial valuation. This has confirmed an annual increase of £0.3m.
- 16 Employer pension contributions for firefighters increased during 2019/20 following a revaluation by the Government Actuary's Department. The Welsh Government provided initial support and a decision on the longer term position was expected in the Spending Review in September 2019. The position for 2020/21 onwards has not yet been announced and this represents a risk of £1.3m. At this time, the budget assumption is that funding will be received.
- 17 An inflationary increase has not been applied to non-pay budgets for a number of years. As part of the budget setting process the specific risks within each budget heading were considered resulting in a proposed increase of £0.4m to £8.2m. This is a 5% increase year on year and reflects the significant and 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.
- 18 Capital financing costs include the costs of borrowing and revenue charges for using capital assets. A rise in Bank of England base rates is anticipated during 2020/21 and this has been factored into the budget. The capital financing budget for 2020/21 has been reduced reflecting the action taken over the last two financial years to reduce the capital programme.
- 19 The draft capital plan is outlined within appendix 3 which confirms a capital requirement of £4.1m for 2020/21. This includes essential investment in new fire appliances and personal protective equipment. This capital expenditure will have a consequential impact on the capital financing charges in future financial years as set out in the MTFS.

### **MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY 2020/23 (MTFS)**

- 20 The draft MTFS is provided within appendix 2 and is an assessment of the costs associated with maintaining the current level of service provision. Employee related expenditure remains the main cost driver and the medium term financial strategy is based on a planning assumption of a 2% pay award.

- 21 The key risks and uncertainties relating to the MTFS are outlined in appendix 1. The current planning assumption for the MTFS is that additional grant funding for the Airwave projective, pay awards in excess of 2% and the additional pension costs arising from the GAD valuation will be centrally funded.

## IMPLICATIONS

Wellbeing Objectives	The budget enables the Authority to achieve its long-term well-being objectives which are: To support people to prevent accidental dwelling fires and stay safe if they do occur; To facilitate high quality, responsive and better integrated fire and rescue services so that prevention activity and emergency response can continue to be available when and where required, affordably, equitably and on the basis of risk.
Budget	The current estimate as to the difference between the existing budget and the requirement for 2020/21 is £0.7m.
Legal	The Fire and Rescue Authority has a legal duty to set a balanced revenue budget.
Staffing	None
Equalities/Human Rights/ Welsh Language	None
Risks and Uncertainties	The draft budget has been risk assessed and the following key risks noted: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The budget is based on an assumption that pay awards will be 2%. National agreements have not yet been reached;</li> <li>• The planning assumption is that Welsh Government support for the increase in firefighters pensions will continue. If this is not supported there is a risk of £1.3m;</li> <li>• The planning assumption is that Welsh Government funding of £0.4m will continue in respect of the national emergency service network (Airwave grant);</li> <li>• The Authority plans to develop an Environmental Strategy during 2020/21. An assessment of costs has not yet been made; and</li> <li>• The uncertainty over the EU Exit remains and no additional costs have been factored into the 2020/21 budget.</li> </ul>

## Appendix 1 - Summary of planning assumptions and risks

Heading	Planning assumptions used in budget setting	Risks
Employee costs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The staffing budgets have been formulated on existing service delivery models.</li> <li>• The current working assumption is that pay inflation will be 2%.</li> <li>• No increases in national insurance contributions are anticipated.</li> <li>• The increase of £0.3m in respect of employer contributions to the Local Government Pension Scheme will be managed through ongoing efficiencies.</li> <li>• It is assumed that the increases to the employer contributions to the firefighters pension scheme will continue to be grant funded by the Welsh Government.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The National Joint Council (NJC) has not yet reached agreement on the firefighter pay award for the period 2017/18.</li> <li>• The Joint Negotiating Committee for Local Authorities has not yet published proposals for the 2020/21 pay award.</li> <li>• The budget planning assumes normal levels of activity. If spate conditions occur budget pressures will be experienced. The working assumption is that the General Fund would be utilised in the first instance.</li> <li>• The Welsh Government has not yet confirmed that the grant to support the increase in employer contributions for the firefighter pension scheme will continue. The costs for 2020/21 are estimated to be £1.3m.</li> <li>• In December 2018, the government lost its appeal to the legal challenge of the transitional pension arrangements for firefighters. The matter will now revert to an Employment Tribunal for rectification. The financial outcome is unknown and no provision has been made.</li> <li>• Following the public inquiry into the Grenfell tragedy there may be changes to building regulations and associated responsibilities. It is not yet known how these may impact on the fire and rescue sector and no provision has been made.</li> </ul>

Non Pay	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Non pay budgets have remained unchanged for a number of years and cost pressures have been mitigated through savings. The initial planning assessment was for this strategy to largely continue with a modest increase. Due to ongoing unavoidable costs pressures which include the rise in fuel costs, backlog maintenance, national non domestic rates, insurance and utilities a budget increase of 6.5% is proposed. Residual costs pressures will continue to be met from cost management across this heading.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Whilst the Service continues to review non-pay costs and strives to manage cost pressures within the planned budget this remains an area of risk due to ongoing pressures within the area of information technology. In particular, the national procurement of an Emergency Services Network has been delayed and the existing contract extended. The assumption is that the current revenue support received from the Welsh Government of £0.4m will continue although this has not yet been confirmed.</li> <li>• The exit from the European Union remains an area of uncertainty across the economy. No provision has been made within the budget for cost increases arising from inflation or exchange rate risks. In the short term the General Reserve would be utilised although this would not be sustainable in the longer term.</li> <li>• The outcome from the consultation on the development of an Environmental Strategy may give rise to additional expenditure. No costs have currently been factored into the base budget for 2020/21.</li> </ul>
Capital Financing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The original planning assessment included a capital programme for 2019/20 of £3.1m resulting in a capital financing requirement of £3.3m. The capital programme has been revised and the current forecast is a capital financing requirement of £2.8m with the reduction being used to fund the cost pressures arising in non-pay.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The potential increase in interest rates is unknown and may exceed planning assumptions.</li> </ul>
Income	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Income budgets have been reviewed and set in line with previous years.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No specific risks have been identified.</li> </ul>

## Appendix 2 Medium Term Financial Strategy 2020/2023 - Revenue

	2019/20 Budget £	2019/20 Projection £	2020/21 Draft Budget £	2021/22 Forecast £	2022/23 Forecast £
Chief Officers	691,854	676,313	656,127	669,250	682,635
Response, Protection and Prevention	22,095,245	21,811,786	22,470,804	22,920,220	23,378,624
Corporate	2,777,677	2,786,067	2,761,274	2,816,500	2,872,830
Other employee costs	429,659	469,659	445,390	454,298	463,384
Pension costs (exc. employer contributions)	1,181,700	1,188,600	1,322,500	1,366,710	1,412,164
<b>Total Employee Costs</b>	<b>27,176,135</b>	<b>26,932,425</b>	<b>27,656,095</b>	<b>28,226,977</b>	<b>28,809,636</b>
Premises	2,242,696	2,532,696	2,328,476	2,375,045	2,422,546
Transport	1,019,556	1,037,556	1,040,608	1,092,638	1,147,270
Supplies and Services	4,178,829	4,356,829	4,450,375	4,539,383	4,630,171
Third Party Payments	416,740	416,740	425,095	433,597	442,268
<b>Total Non Pay Expenditure</b>	<b>7,857,821</b>	<b>8,343,821</b>	<b>8,244,553</b>	<b>8,440,663</b>	<b>8,642,255</b>
Fees and Charges/Misc Income	-456,788	-467,434	-399,570	-399,570	-399,570
Grant Income	-2,395,244	-2,395,244	-2,395,244	-2,395,244	-2,395,244
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>-2,852,032</b>	<b>-2,862,678</b>	<b>-2,794,814</b>	<b>-2,794,814</b>	<b>-2,794,814</b>
Capital Financing and Interest Charges	3,055,188	2,823,544	2,836,020	3,201,411	3,424,801
<b>Budget requirement</b>	<b>35,237,112</b>	<b>35,237,112</b>	<b>35,941,854</b>	<b>37,074,237</b>	<b>38,081,879</b>
<b>Increase in Budget</b>			2%	3%	3%

### Appendix 3 Medium Term Financial Strategy 2020/2023 – Capital

		2019/20	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
Department	Description	Budget £	Estimated Outturn £	Proposed rollover and Budget £	Forecast £	Forecast £
Fleet	Replacement vehicles and appliances	191,000	180,000	1,306,000	1,255,000	1,355,000
Operations	PPE kit and operational equipment	30,000	0	944,682	30,000	30,000
Facilities	Building upgrades	878,000	703,950	1,194,000	2,000,000	850,000
ICT/Control	System upgrades and associated works	953,649	614,385	644,130	400,000	750,000
	<b>Proposed Capital Allocation</b>	<b>2,052,649</b>	<b>1,498,335</b>	<b>4,088,812</b>	<b>3,685,000</b>	<b>2,985,000</b>

#### Appendix 4 – Constituent Local Authority Contributions 2020/21

Authority	2019/2020 Contribution £	Population	Population %	2020/2021 Projected* £	Increase in contributions £	Increase %
Conwy County Borough Council	5,875,914	117,223	17%	5,988,521	112,607	1.9%
Anglesey County Council	3,522,798	70,169	10%	3,584,694	61,896	1.7%
Gwynedd Council	6,226,618	124,426	18%	6,356,498	129,880	2.0%
Denbighshire County Council	4,805,681	95,931	14%	4,900,786	95,105	1.9%
Flintshire County Council	7,790,476	155,442	22%	7,940,999	150,523	1.9%
Wrexham County Borough Council	7,015,625	140,358	20%	7,170,409	154,784	2.2%
<b>Total</b>	<b>35,237,112</b>	<b>703,548</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>35,941,854</b>	<b>704,793</b>	<b>2%</b>

\* 2020/2021 projected contributions from local authorities based on draft budget and must be considered in conjunction with risk and uncertainties outlined in the report.

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Report to	<b>North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority</b>
Date	<b>16 December 2019</b>
Lead Officer	<b>Shân Morris, Assistant Chief Officer (Corporate Policy &amp; Planning)</b>
Contact Officer	<b>Pippa Hardwick, Corporate Planning Manager</b>
Subject	<b>Improvement and Well-being Plan 2020/21</b>



## PURPOSE OF REPORT

1. To inform Members of the progress of the Authority's public consultation and to propose revising the improvement and well-being objectives as part of the process of drafting its next Improvement and Well-being Plan.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

2. The Fire and Rescue Authority (the Authority) is required to publish improvement and well-being objectives and to have involved the public and other stakeholders in the process of developing those objectives.
3. This report provides an indication of the progress of the Authority's ongoing public consultation, and proposes that following feedback from the Well-being of Future Generations Commissioner the Authority takes the opportunity to revise and expand its long-term objectives for 2020/21 onwards.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

4. That Members:
  - i) note the progress of the Authority's ongoing public consultation seeking views on the development and adoption of an environmental strategy; and
  - ii) approve the proposal that Officers draft an expanded set of improvement and well-being objectives for consideration initially by the Executive Panel and subsequently by the full Authority at its next meeting in March 2020.

## **OBSERVATIONS FROM THE EXECUTIVE PANEL/AUDIT COMMITTEE**

5. At its meeting on 13 May 2019 the Executive Panel considered a report summarising the progress made by the Planning Working Group in developing the Authority's improvement and well-being objectives for 2020/21. At that meeting the panel resolved to recommend to the full Authority that it should consult on developing an environmental strategy for adoption from April 2020. At its meeting on 21 October 2019 the Executive Panel also resolved to recommend a review of the Authority's compliance with the Well-being of Future Generations Act.

## **BACKGROUND**

6. 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 accordance 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 in that shorter term improvement objectives can also serve as steps towards achieving longer term well-being objectives.
7. By law the Authority must endeavour to improve its services in the short term and to consider the well-being of future generations of people in the area in the longer term. Its adopted well-being objectives must contribute to meeting Wales's well-being goals, and the Authority must be able to demonstrate that it is taking all reasonable steps (in exercising its functions) to achieve its objectives.
8. The Authority's current long-term objectives are:
  - A. to support people to prevent accidental dwelling fires and stay safe if they do occur; and
  - B. to facilitate high quality, responsive and better integrated fire and rescue services so that prevention activity and emergency response continue to be available when and where required, affordably, equitably and on the basis of risk.
9. The Authority must involve other people in the process of developing and setting its objectives, and report on progress towards achieving them.
10. Following a series of Planning Working Group meetings in 2019 Members considered the Authority's objectives, and the Authority subsequently decided to consult publicly on the development and adoption of an environmental strategy.

11. As part of the Planning Working Group's deliberations, Members considered the impact on the Service of climate change and extreme weather conditions, and the benefit of developing an environmental strategy comprising, for example:
  - resource planning for dealing with extremes of weather-related activity such as widespread flooding and increased grassland fires;
  - public education and collaboration to lessen the impact of weather-related incidents on local communities;
  - monitoring and managing the Service's own energy and fuel usage and waste management;
  - revised procurement policies and accounting arrangements;
  - making positive contributions to biodiversity.
12. Members acknowledged that having adopted environmental and energy policy statements several years ago, it would be appropriate to reinvigorate this work through the development of a new environmental strategy for the Authority that addresses the requirements of the Well-being of Future Generations Act 2015 more obviously, as well as the work being developed through the Public Services Boards in North Wales.

## **INFORMATION**

### **Public Consultation 2019**

13. The consultation continues to seek views from the public and stakeholders on the development and adoption of an environmental strategy. It comprises a range of engagement materials including:
  - an explanatory information document; and
  - an on-line questionnaire, with the option of submitting written responses if preferred.
14. Communication methods have included:
  - a press release with a link to the consultation document and information about how to take part;
  - letters to stakeholders with a copy of the consultation document and information about how to take part;
  - supporting messages on social media directing people to the consultation, maintaining awareness using a short video and highlighting the closing date; and
  - articles and reminders in staff publications.

15. Officers have met with representatives from a number of county councils and town and community councils to explain what the consultation is about and to encourage them to respond to the proposed content of an environmental strategy for the Authority.
16. The on-line questionnaire presented three aspects of developing an environmental strategy:
  - corporate responsibility including, for example, the impact of the Service's own operations, its use of fuel, heating and lighting, its procurement policies and waste management procedures;
  - prevention activity and the challenges of balancing the environmental impact of mileage travelled versus the Service's responsibilities to prevent fires; and
  - emergency response and the challenges of dealing with climate change resulting in e.g. an increase in flooding incidents during wetter winters and in outdoor fires during hotter, drier summers.
17. Responses to the consultation continue to be received and collated and will be taken into account when finalising the Authority's Improvement and Well-being Plan for 2020/21.
18. A report on the overall response to the consultation will be presented for consideration to the Executive Panel at its next meeting in February 2020.

### **Improvement and Well-Being Objectives for 2020/21**

19. Recent feedback from the Well-Being of Future Generations Commissioner suggests the need for the Authority to increase the number of objectives that it is pursuing. This is based on an interpretation of Section 3(2)(a) of the Well-being of Future Generations Act 2015 that a public body must set and publish objectives "*...that are designed to maximise its contribution to achieving each of the well-being goals*".
20. Members will recall that the well-being goals for Wales are to achieve: a prosperous Wales; a resilient Wales; a healthier Wales; a more equal Wales; a Wales of cohesive communities; a Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language; and a globally responsible Wales.

21. Consequently, it is proposed that officers draft an expanded set of improvement and well-being objectives for consideration by the Executive Panel at its next meeting in February 2020. The expanded set will take account of the Commissioner's feedback and also consider how future reporting against the well-being goals and potentially against the National Fire and Rescue Framework can be improved. These revised objectives can then be incorporated within the final draft Improvement and Well-being Plan 2020/21 for approval by the full Authority at its next meeting in March 2020.

## **IMPLICATIONS**

Well-being Objectives	Direct implication for agreeing the Authority's long-term objectives and the associated short-term steps towards their achievement.
Budget	There is a relationship between the Authority's plans for 2020/21 and its financial resources. The draft budget for 2020/21 will be approved by December 2019 and confirmed by mid-February 2020.
Legal	Supports compliance with improvement planning and well-being legislation.
Staffing	No known impact on staffing levels
Equalities/Human Rights/Welsh Language	The impact of specific actions on these aspects will be assessed at the appropriate point in their development.
Risks	Reduces the risks of legal non-compliance and of failing to budget and plan appropriately.

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Report to	<b>North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority</b>
Date	<b>16 December 2019</b>
Lead Officer	<b>Shân Morris, Assistant Chief Officer (Corporate Policy and Planning)</b>
Contact Officer	<b>Pippa Hardwick, Corporate Planning Manager (01745 535286)</b>
Subject	<b>Membership of the Authority's Planning Working Group to develop the Fire and Rescue Authority's plan for 2021/22</b>



### **PURPOSE OF REPORT**

- 1 To agree the membership of the Authority's Planning Working Group 2020.

### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

- 2 The Authority's planning processes will need to commence early in 2020 to allow enough time for the Authority to draft, consult on and approve its 2021/22 plan for publication in early 2021.
- 3 This paper seeks the Authority's decision as regards the membership of a working group to undertake the detailed work of drafting the plan for approval by the full Authority.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 4 Members are asked to:
  - (i) agree that the full membership of the Authority's Executive Panel becomes the membership of the Planning Working Group;
  - (ii) consider whether to continue to include the Chair and Deputy Chair of the Audit Committee on the Planning Working Group; and
  - (ii) note the dates of meetings, to be held at Headquarters, as follows:
    - 20 January, 2pm
    - 2 March, 2pm
    - 30 March, 10am.

### **OBSERVATIONS FROM THE EXECUTIVE PANEL/AUDIT COMMITTEE**

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

## **BACKGROUND**

- 6 The Local Government (Wales) Measure 2009 and the Well-being of Future Generations Act 2015 require Welsh Fire and Rescue Authorities (FRAs) to set themselves objectives and to involve stakeholders in that process.
- 7 The FRAs (Improvement Plans) (Wales) Order 2012 requires those authorities to publish their agreed improvement objectives as soon as reasonably practicable after the 31 December prior to the financial year to which they relate.
- 8 Similarly, the Well-being of Future Generations Act 2015 requires those authorities to explain publicly the steps that they propose to take in the forthcoming financial year towards meeting their long term well-being objectives.
- 9 Since 2003 the Authority has nominated members to sit on working groups to develop plans in accordance with the planning requirements in existence at the time, and this has become an integral part of the budget setting and planning process for the Authority.

## **INFORMATION**

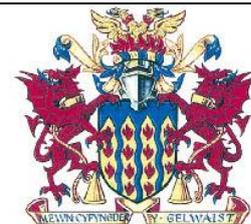
- 10 The Planning Working Group undertakes detailed work associated with the Authority's planning and budget-setting process through a series of meetings. As the Working Group is not a formally constituted committee, these meetings are not open to the public.
- 11 The Planning Working Group submits its observations to the Executive Panel which in turn makes recommendations for improvement and well-being objectives to the full FRA.
- 12 In the past there have been various configurations of membership on the working group. Due to the importance of the budget and planning process Members may consider it prudent to again invite all members of the Executive Panel to be members of the Planning Working Group. In December 2018, Members resolved to include the Chair and Deputy Chair of the Audit Committee as members of the Planning Working Group for 2019.
- 13 It is proposed to hold meetings of the Planning Working Group over the coming months to develop draft objectives for 2021/22 with a view to consulting publicly during 2020 and publishing the Authority's Improvement and Well-being Plan 2021/22 in March 2021.

## IMPLICATIONS

Well-being Objectives	Direct implication for agreeing the steps towards the Authority's long-term well-being objectives.
Budget	Direct implication for developing the Authority's budget for 2020/21 and beyond.
Legal	Supports the Authority's compliance with relevant legislation for improvement planning and working towards meeting well-being objectives.
Staffing	No known impact on staffing levels during the drafting phase, but potential impact (as yet unknown) arising from the final adopted plan.
Equalities/Human Rights/Welsh Language	The impact on a range of aspects to be assessed during drafting and producing the plan.
Risks	Reduces the risks of legal non-compliance and of failing to budget and plan appropriately.

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Report to	<b>North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority Annual Meeting</b>
Date	<b>16 December 2019</b>
Lead Officer	<b>Clerk</b>
Contact Officer	<b>Colin Everett (01745 535286)</b>
Subject	<b>Meeting Dates 2020/21</b>



## PURPOSE OF REPORT

1. To inform Members of the dates for meetings of the full Fire and Rescue Authority, Executive Panel and Audit Committee for 2020/21.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

2. Dates for meetings of the full Fire and Rescue Authority, Executive Panel and Audit Committee for 2020/21 are as shown in paragraphs 7-9 of this report.

## RECOMMENDATION

3. That Members note the dates for meetings of the Fire and Rescue Authority, Executive Panel and Audit Committee set for the forthcoming year.

## BACKGROUND

4. Dates of all meetings until June 2020 were set in June 2019. Advance notification of dates will assist Members and officers with their schedules.

## INFORMATION

### Fire and Rescue Authority

5. Standing Order 4(2) of the Authority's Standing Orders says that meetings of the Authority shall take place a minimum of four times per year and the annual meeting shall take place no later than June. These meetings shall normally take place on the third Monday of the month unless otherwise determined by the Chair in consultation with the Clerk and Chief Fire Officer.

6. Dates for the NWFRA meetings to be held at Conwy County Borough Council Chamber, 10.30am, are scheduled as follows:

Monday 16 March 2020  
 Monday 15 June 2020  
 Monday 21 September 2020  
 Monday 21 December 2020  
 Monday 15 March 2021

### Executive Panel

7. Dates for the Executive Panel meetings, to be held at Fire and Rescue Service Headquarters St Asaph (normally at 10.00am), are scheduled as follows:

Monday 10 February 2020  
 Monday 18 May 2020  
 Monday 27 July 2020, **2pm**  
 Monday 19 October 2020  
 Monday 15 February 2021

### Audit Committee

8. Dates for the Audit Committee meetings, to be held at Fire and Rescue Service Headquarters St Asaph at 10.00am, are scheduled as follows:

Monday 27 January 2020  
 Monday 27 July 2020  
 Monday 21 September 2020, **9.30am, Bodlondeb**  
 Monday 25 January 2021

### IMPLICATIONS

Wellbeing Objectives	Not considered relevant
Budget	Not considered relevant
Legal	Meetings are held in accordance with the NWFRA's Standing Orders and relevant terms of reference Members are expected to abide by their code of conduct at all times
Staffing	Not considered relevant
Equalities/Human Rights/ Welsh Language	All meetings of the Fire and Rescue Authority are equalities compliant
Risks	Not considered relevant

Report to	<b>North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority</b>	
Date	<b>16 December 2019</b>	
Lead Officer	<b>Shân Morris, Assistant Chief Officer (Corporate Policy and Planning)</b>	
Contact Officer	<b>Pippa Hardwick, Corporate Planning Manager (01745 535297)</b>	
Subject	<b>Public Services Boards - Update</b>	

### **PURPOSE OF REPORT**

- 1 To summarise for Members the progress that each of the four North Wales Public Services Boards (PSBs) has made towards meeting the well-being objectives set in their well-being plans that were published in April/May 2018.

### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

- 2 The four North Wales PSBs have published their first annual reports demonstrating progress against well-being plans for their areas. The PSBs continue to meet regularly and to work through subject sub-groups.
- 3 Whilst the well-being plans themselves identified 74 priorities for North Wales, the four PSBs rationalised the number of priorities to focus on specific areas of need for 2018/19.
- 4 In accordance with the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 the four PSBs published their annual reports prior to June 2019 and sent copies to Welsh Ministers, the Commissioner, the Auditor General for Wales and the relevant local authority's overview and scrutiny committee.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 5 That Members note the progress that has been made by the four PSBs in North Wales towards achieving their well-being objectives, as outlined in their annual reports.

## **BACKGROUND**

- 6 In April 2016, the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 established a statutory PSB in each local authority area in Wales.
- 7 North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority (the Authority) is a statutory member of every PSB in its area, as is the local authority for the PSB area, Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board and Natural Resources Wales. Under the Act, certain other organisations *must* be invited to take part in the work of the Board and others *may* be invited to do so.
- 8 There are currently four PSBs in North Wales – Wrexham, Flintshire, Conwy and Denbighshire, and Gwynedd and Anglesey. Since March 2016, the Chief Fire Officer has been the Authority's designated representative on the PSBs.
- 9 The Act placed a duty on PSBs to: assess the state of well-being in their areas; publish their first well-being assessments in 2017; and, following a number of engagement and approval stages, publish their first well-being plans by 3 May 2018.
- 10 The assessments considered the strengths and assets of local areas, the people and communities living there and the challenges and opportunities for PSBs now and in future. Feedback was sought from local residents, businesses and visitors across the whole of North Wales.
- 11 Using the assessments of well-being, PSBs set local objectives designed to maximise their contribution to achieving the national well-being goals in their areas. Prior to publication the first set of local well-being plans required approval by the individual statutory members and by the PSBs themselves.

## **OBSERVATIONS FROM EXECUTIVE PANEL/AUDIT COMMITTEE**

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

## **INFORMATION**

- 13 Final draft versions of the four local well-being plans were presented to Members in March 2018 and were given the Authority's approval. No significant changes were made to the well-being plans prior to their publication. The final published plans are available on each PSB's website.

- 14 Analysis of the four PSB well-being plans revealed a total of 74 priorities for North Wales. These priorities were grouped under 16 key headings: Community; Housing; Education; Health Education; Health; Responsible Citizens; Well-Being; Environment; Environmental Responsibility; Community Environment Projects; Tourism; Economy; Infrastructure; Skills For Work; Social Prescribing; and Workforce Health.
- 15 All PSBs developed actions to address the complex issues identified as priorities within the plans. Working groups were established to deliver the priorities, and time-bound work plans were created with progress regularly reported back to each PSB.
- 16 Some of the objectives developed by the PSBs align with the Authority's own long term improvement and well-being objectives and, where these have been identified, an integrated approach is being taken in order to maximise opportunities to work collaboratively with partners and stakeholders.
- 17 Partnership working is developing around areas such as climate change, biodiversity, community cohesion and prevention. Work is ongoing to explore further opportunities to work collaboratively so as to avoid duplication of effort across public sector organisations, and encourage the sharing of resources.
- 18 **Conwy and Denbighshire PSB**  
After analysing the feedback from its consultation Conwy and Denbighshire PSB rationalised the number of priorities from six to three. It did this by looking at the synergies between priorities, the impact the PSB could have, the long term implications and where work was already in place so as to avoid duplication. The priorities below were selected on the basis of where the PSB could add the most value collectively:
- People - Supporting good mental well-being
  - Community - Supporting Community Empowerment
  - Place - Supporting Environment Resilience

A detailed summary of what the PSB has achieved can be found in its [annual report](#).

- 19 **Wrexham PSB**  
Following its public consultation Wrexham PSB developed themes that people living in the county of Wrexham felt were important, and it therefore decided to focus on a couple of these at a time, rather than trying to do everything at once. Three programme boards were established around:

- Children and young people are given a healthy start in life
- All people have the opportunity to learn and develop throughout their lives
- East Area Strategic Group (EAST) to take forward and implement Healthier Wales across North East Wales

A detailed summary of what the PSB has achieved can be found in its [annual report](#).

## 20 **Flintshire PSB**

For 2018/19, the Board set five priorities and a number of in-year priorities as detailed within the Well-being Plan for Flintshire:

- Community Safety
- Economy and Skills
- Environment
- Healthy and Independent Living
- Resilient Communities

A detailed summary of what the PSB has achieved can be found in its [annual report](#).

## 21 **Gwynedd and Anglesey PSB**

The well-being plan confirmed the two objectives and six priority areas where the Board agreed to work together to ensure the best outcomes for the residents of Gwynedd and Anglesey:

- Communities that thrive and are prosperous in the long term
  1. The Welsh language
  2. Homes for local people
  3. The effect of poverty on the well-being of our communities
  4. The effect of climate change on the well-being of communities
- Healthy and independent residents with a good quality of life
  1. Health and care of adults
  2. The welfare and achievement of children and young people

A detailed summary of what the PSB has achieved can be found in its [annual report](#).

22 A copy of each of these annual progress reports has been sent to the relevant local authority's overview and scrutiny committee as well as to the Welsh Ministers, the Well-being of Future Generations Commissioner and the Auditor General for Wales.

## IMPLICATIONS

Well-being Objectives	Some of the objectives developed by the PSBs align with the Authority's own long-term improvement and well-being objectives around areas such as climate change, biodiversity, community cohesion and prevention.
Budget	No known implications at present but it is possible that some financial contributions will be sought for collaborative projects through the PSBs.
Legal	No known implications.
Staffing	No known impact on staffing levels, but it is possible that planning and delivering the well-being objectives will involve North Wales Fire and Rescue Service resources.
Equalities/Human Rights/ Welsh Language	PSB objectives seek to improve the well-being of people living in North Wales. A number of objectives contribute to the 'more equal Wales' goal.
Risks	As a statutory Member of four PSBs delivering four local well-being plans comprising 74 identified priorities, North Wales Fire and Rescue Service could potentially struggle to maintain an appropriate level of active involvement.

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Report to	<b>North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority</b>	
Date	<b>16 December 2019</b>	
Lead Officer	<b>Helen MacArthur, Assistant Chief Officer (Finance and Procurement)</b>	
Contact Officer	<b>Stephen Roberts, Head of Facilities 01745 588430</b>	
Subject	<b>Biodiversity and the Environment Wales Act 2016</b>	

## PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1 This report addresses North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority's compliance with section 6 of the Environment (Wales) Act 2016. It also provides information on proposed future planning and reporting of actions by the Authority in relation to improving biodiversity within its estate.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 2 The Authority is required to plan for, and report on its actions to improve biodiversity within its estate. This report presents a draft Biodiversity and Resilience of Ecosystems Report 2019 for approval to publish on the Authority's website by the end of December in accordance with section 6 of the Environment (Wales) Act 2016.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3 Members are asked to approve the contents of the attached Biodiversity and Resilience of Ecosystems Report 2019 to be incorporated into an illustrated publication on the Authority's website before the end of December 2019.

## OBSERVATIONS FROM THE EXECUTIVE PANEL/AUDIT COMMITTEE

- 4 This report has not previously been considered.

## BACKGROUND

- 5 Biodiversity relates to the variety of life found on earth. The economy and people's health and well-being depend on healthy, resilient ecosystems for food, clean water and air, raw materials, energy and protection against hazards such as flooding and climate change.
- 6 The Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006 placed a duty on public authorities to have regard to the conservation of biodiversity in the proper exercise of their functions.

- 7 In 2015 the Welsh Government launched a Nature Recovery Action Plan aimed at reversing the decline of biodiversity in Wales. This Plan set out how Wales would deliver the commitments of the EU Biodiversity Strategy and the UN Convention on Biological Diversity through short term actions up to 2020 and as longer term commitments beyond 2020.
- 8 The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 put in place seven well-being goals for Wales that public bodies listed in the Act must work to achieve. One of those goals relates to a 'resilient Wales', making Wales 'a nation which maintains and enhances a biodiverse natural environment with healthy functioning ecosystems that support social, economic and ecological resilience and the capacity to adapt to change'.
- 9 In 2016 public authorities in Wales became subject to the Environment (Wales) Act 2016 which introduced an enhanced biodiversity and resilience of ecosystems duty (the 'section 6 duty').
- 10 The section 6 duty requires public authorities – including fire and rescue authorities – to seek to maintain and enhance biodiversity so far as consistent with the proper exercise of their functions and, in so doing, to promote the resilience of ecosystems.
- 11 Public authorities should embed the consideration of biodiversity and ecosystems into all their activities including business planning, policies, programmes and projects. Specifically, each public authority must publish a plan setting out how it proposes to comply with the section 6 duty, and a report describing what it has already done in this regard. The first such retrospective report must be published by the end of 2019, and every three years thereafter.

## **INFORMATION**

- 12 The Service has been working to an action plan for managing the Authority's premises in ways that enhance the biodiversity of its estate by addressing the six objectives listed in the Nature Recovery Action Plan for Wales. Further details are provided in the attached draft Biodiversity and Resilience of Ecosystems Report 2019 (please refer to Appendix 1).
- 13 In addition to this, the Authority's draft objectives for 2020/21 include an intention to develop and adopt an Environmental Strategy. Future biodiversity action planning would therefore fall within the remit of this broader strategy.

- 14 The draft text of the Authority's first section 6 biodiversity report is contained within Appendix 1. Subject to the Authority's approval, this will be incorporated into an illustrated report for publication on the Authority's website by the statutory deadline of the end of December 2019.
- 15 Although reporting against the section 6 duty under the Environment (Wales) Act 2016 is required only every three years, more frequent reporting can in future be incorporated into the Authority's Annual Performance Assessments.

## IMPLICATIONS

Well-being Objectives	Direct implication for agreeing the steps towards meeting one of the Authority's long-term improvement and well-being objectives.
Budget	There is a clear relationship between the Authority's plans for 2020/21 and the level of financial resources available. The budget for 2020/21 must be confirmed by mid-February 2020.
Legal	Supports compliance with improvement planning, well-being and environment legislation
Staffing	No known impact on staffing levels.
Equalities/Human Rights/Welsh Language	The impact of specific actions on these aspects will be assessed at the appropriate point in their development.
Risks	Reduces the risks of legal non-compliance and of failing to budget and plan appropriately.

## **North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority Biodiversity and Resilience of Ecosystems Report 2019**

### **Introduction**

North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority has a contract with the Facilities Management Department of North Wales Police to ensure the delivery of biodiversity projects and the grounds maintenance contract for its premises.

The current grounds maintenance contract expires on 31st March 2020. In developing the specification for the new contract, actions to enhance biodiversity have been taken into consideration.

Between April and November each year the grounds maintenance contract involves the following regime:

- all grassed areas at sites are cut every two weeks;
- shrubs, hedges and trees are trimmed as required;
- herbicide is applied to control weeds to paved areas, kerbs and the base of buildings;
- hard standings (car park, paths, etc.) are cleared of litter, and all waste arising (grass, leaves, dead shrubs etc.) is removed off-site;
- controlling and managing invasive non-native species - Japanese knotweed is under strict management at 3 sites.

The potential to address biodiversity considerations within the estate is high, with 83% of sites having areas of soft landscaping (grassed areas) and 46% of those sites containing shrubs, hedges or trees. Only 17% of sites are devoid of any vegetation.

The Authority's estate can be grouped into 3 types of site:

- Group 1 – where grounds contain hard standings, grassed areas and shrubs, hedges and/or trees;
- Group 2 – where grounds contain hard standings and grassed areas;
- Group 3 – where grounds contain hard standings only.

### **Biodiversity enhancement projects**

To date, there have been three biodiversity enhancement projects, each project being based on a 'habitat creation scheme' with an objective to increase the biodiversity value of the site, provide connectivity within and between ecosystems and reduce fragmentation.

#### Project 1: Fire and Rescue Service Headquarters, St Asaph Business Park.

A biodiversity project has been in place at this location since 2007 in the form of a butterfly garden, hedgerow and green amenity space for staff. In conjunction with the North Wales Butterfly Conservation Group, a grassed area to the rear of the building was turned into a butterfly garden and a

128m 'wildlife corridor' hedgerow planted along the fence line between the Service Headquarters and the adjacent Joint Communications Centre, linking the garden with the habitats beyond the site boundaries. Because the Business Park is home to greater crested newts, an ecologist was brought in to advise during the works, as a precautionary measure.

#### Project 2: Nefyn Fire and Police Station, Parc Dwyfor, Nefyn.

Nefyn Fire and Police Station is a new build (BREEAM excellent) site. A biodiversity project has been in place there since 2014, when the site was completed.

The premises were built on land that was formerly an area of rough grassland fields that had been under agricultural management for some time. These fields were classified as species-poor semi-improved grassland in the Phase 1 Habitat survey prior to development.

The design and implementation of the biodiversity management plan for the site incorporates areas of wildflower grassland (for pollinators); bat, insect and bird boxes; and basking and hibernation refugia for reptiles. Planting on site comprises native plant, scrub and tree species.

#### Project 3: Tywyn Fire and Police Station, Pendre Enterprise Park, Tywyn.

Tywyn Fire and Police Station is a new build (BREEAM excellent) site. A biodiversity project has been in place there since 2015, when the site was completed.

These premises were built on land that was identified in the Phase 1 Habitat survey as being an area of species-poor semi-improved and amenity grasslands which contained a hedgerow with trees to the southern boundary that did not connect to the wildlife corridors along the railway line or field boundaries in the wider landscape.

The design and implementation of the biodiversity management plan for the site included a gently sloping bank made from site construction works topsoil strip clearance to create additional surface area for planting. The perimeter of the site boundary is planted with native plant, scrub and tree species, and includes areas of wildflower grassland and a wetland pond area. The planted areas connect with the existing hedgerow and trees. Bird boxes have been installed on the building and in the trees.

## **Biodiversity and Resilience of Ecosystems Action Plan**

This Action Plan describes the Authority's contribution to the Nature Recovery Action Plan for Wales (NRAP) objectives, with regards to the management of grounds and the maintenance and enhancement of biodiversity on Authority premises.

### **NRAP Objective 1: Engage and support participation and understanding to embed biodiversity throughout decision making at all levels.**

North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority initially committed to addressing biodiversity on its estate through its Sustainable Development Action Plan (SDAP) which covers the period 1st April 2007 to 31st March 2020. The SDAP is implemented and managed through a contract with North Wales Police's Facilities Management Department. Data, information and reports relating to subject areas under the SDAP are provided to the Fire and Rescue Authority and senior management of the Fire and Rescue Service as required or requested.

Raising awareness of biodiversity issues has been mainly project site-based. For example, the Fire and Rescue Headquarters biodiversity project provided staff with information on the project and the reasons why it was being undertaken. There has been good engagement with the scheme, with staff photographing species (butterflies and other insects) and providing feedback on any issues to the Facilities Management Department.

### **NRAP Objective 2: Safeguard species and habitats of principal importance and improve their management.**

The Service does not have any protected sites within its estate. However, the Fire and Rescue Headquarters is located on the St Asaph Business Park which is home to protected greater crested newts, so any grounds disturbance works take into consideration the legislative requirements pertaining to the newts.

### **NRAP Objective 3: Increase the resilience of our natural environment by restoring degraded habitats and habitat creation.**

This objective will be met through the implementation of the new Grounds Maintenance and Biodiversity Enhancement Contract, commencing on 1st April 2020. The specification for the new contract is currently under development. Each site is being assessed for its grounds maintenance requirements and habitat creation potential, with a site-specific regime being written for each site, including site plans and measurements of vegetated areas. There will be site-specific requirements, but the main regimes to be put in place from the 1st April 2020 are:

**Grassed Areas:** Unless the grassed area needs to be maintained as a formal feature or it is too small, the cutting regime will be reduced from every two weeks between April and August to one cut in the spring and one in the autumn; thus allowing the grass to grow between April and August each year to increase the habitat area available to pollinators and other species.

Where grassed areas are to be left to grow between April and August, a strip along the edge of the grass next to hard standings will be cut regularly, to demarcate the biodiversity area, indicate the area is being managed and allow for any health and safety considerations for personnel using the site. An assessment will be undertaken of the sites in July 2020 to determine the success of the Year 1 growing regime and modifications required for Year 2 determined. For areas of grass that are too small to leave to grow, these will be assessed for alternative 'pollinator friendly' habitats, such as flower-beds or planters.

**Shrubs and Trees:** All trees will be recorded in a tree inventory, stating location, any tree protection orders, species, approximate age, condition (to determine the health of the tree and to undertake risk assessments relating to the tree itself from disease such as ash die-back and to property or people from e.g. dead branches which could potentially fall).

Where trees need to be removed, they will be replaced with suitable native species. Where trees have been removed in the past and gaps in the habitat exist, where viable these gaps will be closed by planting new trees. Hedges and shrubs will be trimmed at the appropriate time of year and will take into consideration species that may be using them, such as nesting birds.

Where shrubs or hedges need to be renewed or repaired, flowering species (such as hawthorn) will be used as a feed stock for pollinators. Log piles, bat, bird and insect boxes will be installed at sites were viable.

**Awareness Raising of Biodiversity:** North Wales Fire and Rescue Service personnel will be informed of the change of grounds maintenance regime and the reasons behind it. Public information boards will be displayed at sites where the front is subject to a project.

#### **NRAP Objective 4: Tackle key pressures on species and habitats.**

Japanese knotweed control is in place at three sites and is subject to ongoing status monitoring.

An assessment of the risk to the ash trees on the Authority's premises from ash die-back disease will be undertaken in the spring of 2020 when the trees come back into leaf.

Using the information from its tree inventory, the Service will liaise with Natural Resources Wales to calculate the carbon sequestration value of the trees. The decarbonisation value to the Service's carbon footprint as a result of tree carbon sequestration within the estate will be determined.

If a green space for staff, visitors or community groups is created, seating will be sourced from sustainable and social sources.

The use of pesticides and herbicides; the Service already specifies to contractors to ensure that the use of these substances is proportionate, that they are not applied to wet foliage or when rain is expected, that all litter and waste arising is removed prior to spraying and that their equipment is fitted with approved guards to prevent spray drift.

**NRAP Objective 5: Improve our evidence, understanding and monitoring:**

A biodiversity inventory of the Authority's estate will be produced, comprising site plans, measurements of grassed areas and habitats on site.

The baseline year for the inventory will be the 2019/20 financial year, where sites have been subject to the current grounds maintenance regime.

The Inventory will be updated annually, reflecting projects undertaken at each site and further works required. All Inventories, data and information will be accessible to Cofnod (the North Wales Local Environmental Records Centre), the Wales Biodiversity Partnership, local Biodiversity Officers, Public Services Board partner organisations, North Wales Wildlife Trust and any other interested parties.

**NRAP Objective 6: Put in a place a framework of governance and support for delivery:**

The day-to-day delivery of biodiversity action at the Authority's sites is administered through the Environmental and Energy Conservation Section of North Wales Police's Facilities Management Department.

The Service will seek support from Public Services Board members and partner organisations and local wildlife groups for the species identification at sites. For example, consideration will be given to hosting a BioBlitz in conjunction with the Wildlife Trust, opening the grounds of a fire station for the day to members of the public and ecology experts to help assess and record species found on site; with the results being recorded with Cofnod.