

**NORTH WALES FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY**  
**AUDIT COMMITTEE**

Minutes of the **Audit Committee** of the North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority held on Monday 15 December 2025 virtually via Zoom. Meeting commenced at 09.30hrs.

**Councillor**

Gareth Sandilands (Chair)  
Tina Claydon (Deputy Chair)  
Ann Davies  
Ian Hodge  
John Brynmor Hughes  
Gareth R Jones  
Arwyn Herald Roberts  
Austin Roberts

**Representing**

Denbighshire County Council  
Flintshire County Council  
Denbighshire County Council  
Flintshire County Council  
Gwynedd Council  
Conwy County Borough Council  
Gwynedd Council  
Conwy County Borough Council

**Also present:**

Helen MacArthur  
Anthony Jones  
Justin Evans  
Elgan W Roberts  
Dafydd Edwards  
Gareth Owens  
Angharad Ellis  
Carwyn Rees  
Heledd Davies  
Lisa Allington

Assistant Chief Fire Officer  
Assistant Chief Fire Officer  
Assistant Chief Fire Officer  
Head of Finance and Procurement  
Treasurer  
Clerk and Monitoring Officer  
MIAA  
Audit Wales  
Translator  
Executive Assistant – minute taker

**1.0 APOLOGIES**

**Name**

Jeff Evans  
Beverley Parry-Jones  
Gwynfor Owen

**Representing**

Anglesey County Council  
Wrexham County Borough Council  
Gwynedd Council

**ABSENT**

**Name**

Bryan Apsley  
Chrissy Gee  
Marc Jones

**Representing**

Wrexham County Borough Council  
Flintshire County Council  
Wrexham County Borough Council

## **2.0 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

2.1 There were no declarations of interest to record.

## **3.0 NOTICE OF URGENT MATTERS**

3.1 There were no notices of urgent matters.

## **4.0 MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 15 SEPTEMBER 2025**

4.1 The minutes of the meeting held on 15 September 2025 were submitted for approval. A proposal was made that they were a true and accurate record of proceedings. This was seconded and passed with all in favour.

4.2 ACFO Helen MacArthur confirmed that the response to the Welsh Government consultation on Governance Reform for Fire and Rescue Authorities (FRA) had been submitted by the deadline, although the outcome was as yet unknown.

### **4.3 RESOLVED to:**

**i) approve the minutes as a true and accurate record of the meetings held, noting the above amendments.**

## **5.0 APPOINTMENT OF DEPUTY CHAIR**

5.1 Nominations were invited for the role of Deputy Chair of the Audit Committee. A nomination was made for Tina Claydon. This was proposed and seconded with all in favour.

### **5.2 RESOLVED to:**

**i) Appoint Cllr Tina Claydon as Deputy Chair of the Audit Committee with effect from 15 December 2025.**

## **6.0 NATIONAL FRAUD INITIATIVE AUDIT WALES REPORT 2024-25**

6.1 Carwyn Rees from Audit Wales was welcomed to the meeting and presented the paper on the National Fraud Initiative Audit Wales 2024-25, a biennial UK-wide initiative. The report provided the background to the initiative and a summary of the matches for North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority (the Authority). It was noted that in Wales the initiative fell under the statutory powers of the Auditor General for Wales.

6.2 ACFO MacArthur clarified that a data match was not an indication of fraud, merely a signpost to a match that required further review. For example, should someone feature on North Wales Fire and Rescue Service's (the Service) payroll but also on the payroll of a local authority, that would generate a match.

**6.3 RESOLVED to:**

- i) **Note the background to the National Fraud Initiative and the matches for the Authority; and**
- ii) **Note the assurances provided by the Authority's internal auditor within its update report for this Committee.**

**7.0 INTERNAL AUDIT PROGRESS REPORT DECEMBER 2025**

7.1 Angharad Ellis was welcomed to the meeting and delivered the Internal Audit Progress Report December 2025. The aim of this report was to update Members on the work undertaken by the Authority's internal audit providers, MIAA, for the 2025/26 financial year from 1 September 2025 to 30 November 2025. It was noted that two reports had been issued since the last Audit Committee.

7.2 A Member noted that there were 29 very high data matches within the NFI results and asked whether this was unusual for an organisation of this size. Angharad responded that it was relatively low for the size and type of organisation and that these data matches had all now been reviewed without any cases requiring escalation. The exercise would be repeated in two years' time.

7.3 It was highlighted that MIAA had now been awarded their cyber accreditation and congratulations were provided.

**7.4 RESOLVED to:**

- i) **Note the work undertaken by MIAA during 2025/26**

**8.0 TREASURY MANAGEMENT REPORT Q2 2025/26**

8.1 Dafydd Edwards, Treasurer, summarised the Treasury Management Report Q2 2025/26, the purpose of which was to provide Members of the Authority with an update on the treasury management activity and compliance with the treasury management prudential indicators for the period 1 June 2025 – 30 September 2025. Key data throughout the report was highlighted.

8.2 A Member asked if the Service's investments and borrowings were benchmarked against other Fire and Rescue Services (FRS), and the Treasurer responded that they were not. A proportion of the Service's borrowings were historical which would make them difficult to benchmark but was something that could be considered in the future, if it were possible.

8.3 ACFO MacArthur confirmed that the Authority's Treasury Management Advisors, Arlingclose, did carry out benchmarking exercises and would be asked to look at this across the other Welsh FRS in the future, if possible. In relation to the debt portfolio, decisions had been made around affordability, and it was recognised that the development of Hwb Awen, the new training centre, would be a pivotal decision point over the next 18-months.

#### **8.4 RESOLVED to:**

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

#### **9.0 BUDGET SETTING 2026/27**

9.1 Elgan Roberts, Head of Finance, presented the Budget Setting 2026/27 paper which provided Members with an update on the financial planning assessment to set a balanced budget for 2026/27 and sought endorsement to communicate the indicative levy to constituent local authorities. The full revenue budget requirement was £54.375m and following the utilisation of reserves a total of £54.104m would be levied resulting in a year-on-year increase of 4.47%.

9.2 Thanks were given to the members of the Budget Scrutiny working Group, the Finance Department and budget holders for their engagement and hard work in setting the budget.

9.3 It was asked how the increase in levy percentage was calculated. Elgan confirmed that the percentages were based on the population data from the Office of National Statistics which had been collected mid-2024, along with the type of population. This was a statutory requirement. Therefore, any local authority that had an increase over 4.7% meant that they had likely experienced an increase in population data. It was noted that the Welsh Government funding formula which calculated the local authority allocations was also based on the same data.

9.4 It was confirmed that with regards to capital financing, future borrowing requirements were based on estimates by Arlingclose alongside the delivery of the Capital Plan. If the capital programme were delayed an underspend would be created.

- 9.5 Members were advised that pay award estimates were consistent with that of other local authorities and FRAs, but negotiations remained ongoing. Should the pay award be settled above 3.8%, the difference would be managed internally for 2026-27 with the general fund being utilised if this was not achievable. The shortfall for 2025-26 had been absorbed via vacancy control. The Treasurer noted that the pay award was the largest variable within the budget; however, he felt that 3.8% was reasonable and appropriate.
- 9.6 ACFO Jones confirmed that in relation to the emergency cover review and the new nucleus crewing pilot, efficiencies had been collectively agreed to finance the pilot and tangible improvements were being made.
- 9.7 A Member asked if the Service Level Agreements (SLAs) remained fit for purpose and Elgan confirmed that a holistic SLA review remained ongoing to ensure that they had not increased past the rate of inflation.
- 9.8 It was confirmed that the Service's reserves were utilised to limit the increase to the levy based on the Service's research strategy and Members received assurance from the Treasurer that reserves were only used for non-recurring expenditure.
- 9.9 It was asked what the Representative Bodies felt about the increase to the budget and confirmed that the item was due to be discussed at the next Joint Consultation and Negotiation Committee.
- 9.10 A Member asked if an increase in flooding incidents had been experienced and whether this had impacted negatively on the budget. ACFO MacArthur confirmed that provision for wildfires and severe weather events was part of budget planning and anything over the amount allocated would be drawn from reserves. ACFO Jones confirmed that flooding incidents had decreased in the first two quarters by approximately 60%.
- 9.11 It was highlighted that the projection at the beginning of the budget setting process had been 7.5% and so to reduce this to 4.7% was a real achievement.

## **9.12 RESOLVED to:**

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

## **10.0 UPDATE TO SCHEME OF FINANCIAL DELEGATION**

- 10.1 ACFO MacArthur delivered the update to the Scheme of Financial Delegation for consideration and approval. This review would ensure that the Scheme remained fully aligned with current Financial Regulations and Contract Procedure Rules, strengthening governance and compliance across all financial and procurement activities.
- 10.2 The Treasurer advised that he was content with the proposals and any increases were reasonable.
- 10.3 Chair asked how members were envisaged to be involved in decision making processes moving forwards. ACFO MacArthur confirmed that the Budget Scrutiny Working Group were heavily involved in reviewing capital expenditure and a meeting would be arranged in the new year to facilitate this.

## **10.4 RESOLVED to:**

- i) Approve the updated Scheme of Financial Delegation.**

## **11.0 URGENT MATTERS**

There were no urgent matters to discuss.

It was moved that the meeting progress to Part II and this was proposed and seconded with all in favour. The live stream was terminated. Those present from MIAA were asked to leave the meeting.

Part I concluded at 10:27

## **PART II**

### **12.0 INTERNAL AUDIT ARRANGEMENTS FROM APRIL 2026**

- 12.1 ACFO MacArthur presented the Internal Audit Arrangements from April 2026 paper which outlined to Members the need to consider the provision of internal audit services from April 2026 and proposed the extension of the existing arrangement for a period of 24 months.
- 12.2 ACFO MacArthur noted that the quality of the service from MIAA had been very good and that she was comfortable to recommend that the extension take place. The scope and quality of the work carried out by MIAA to date had been good and the service remained cost efficient. Renewing this contract would also have the benefit of continuity and the Welsh language provision was an additional benefit.

### **12.3 RESOLVED to:**

- i) **Endorse the recommendation for the extension of the appointment of Mersey Internal Audit Agency as the Authority's internal audit providers for the financial period 1 April 2026- 31 March 2028, in 12-month periods.**

Part II concluded 10:30