

# Annual Governance Statement 2022–2023

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



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

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# Delivering Good Governance Framework

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

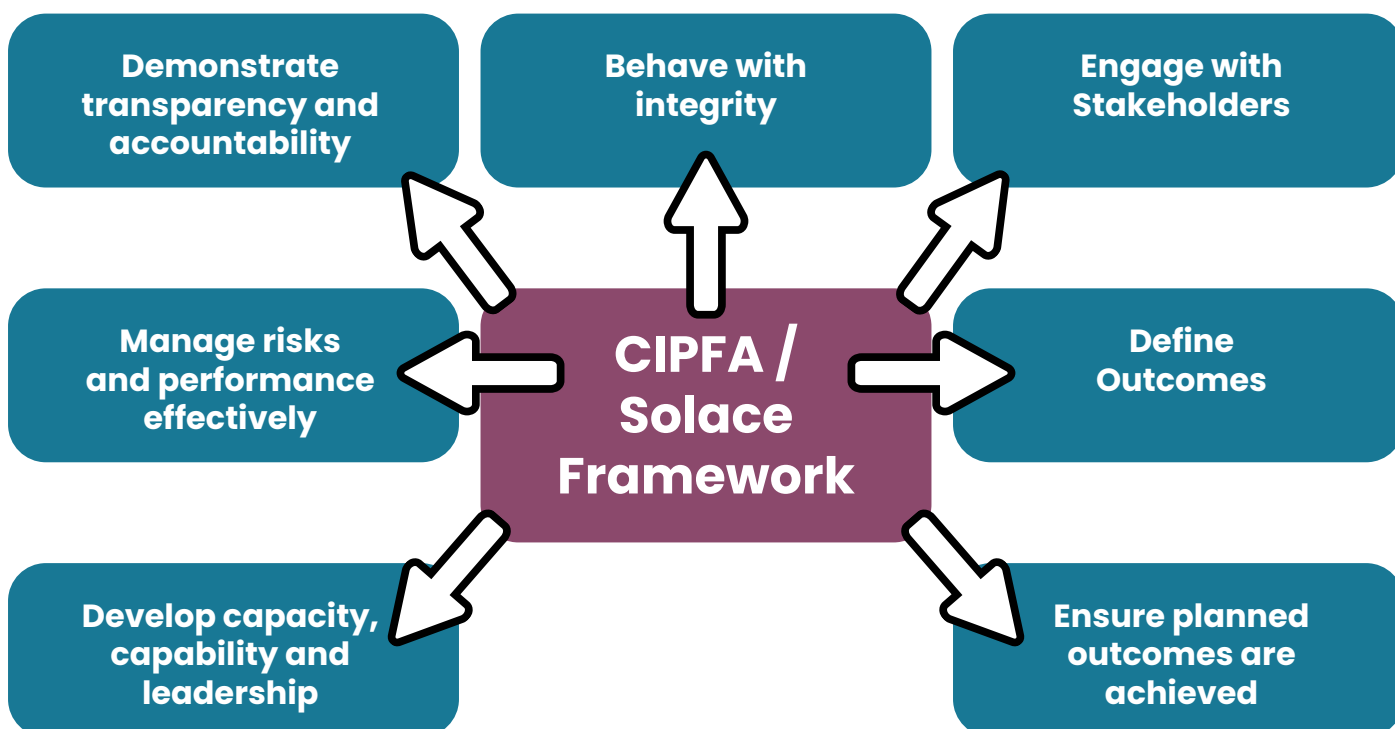
- business is conducted in accordance with all relevant laws and regulations
- public money is safeguarded and properly accounted for
- resources are used economically, efficiently and effectively to achieve agreed priorities which benefit local people.

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

Stakeholders are, therefore, interested in issues such as:

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

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



# Key Contributors to Developing and Maintaining the Governance Framework

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



## Summary: Governance Arrangements

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

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

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

# Governance Arrangements

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

# Summary of the Authority's Governance Framework

## Principles of Good Governance

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

### Evidence Sources

- Medium Term Financial Strategy
- Financial planning
- Partnership arrangements
- HR strategy and policies
- Contract Procedure Rules
- Constitution
- Job descriptions
- Chief Fire Officer
- Treasurer
- Monitoring Officer
- Published reports
- Community Engagement Plan
- Communication Strategy
- Improvement and Well-being Plan
- Integrated Impact Assessments

### Assurance Sources

- Performance reports
- Financial reports
- Democratic arrangements
- Reports from external audit and regulators
- Internal Audit reports
- Partnership boards
- Customer feedback
- Consultations
- Governance Structure

### Members

- Fire and Rescue Authority and its committees

### Executive

- Executive Board

### Evidence Sources

- Leadership
- Core Values
- Equalities arrangements
- FOI arrangements
- Codes of Conduct
- Anti-fraud and Corruption Policy
- Whistle-blowing Policy
- Audit and Standards Committees
- Expert advice and guidance
- Risk management
- Internal controls
- Internal Audit service
- Information management
- Staff and elected member development
- Complaints processes

**Annual Governance and Improvement Assessment signed by Chair and Chief Fire Officer**

**Governance Improvement Action Plan reviewed quarterly by Executive Board**

# Core Principles

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

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



## Ensuring openness and comprehensive stakeholder engagement

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

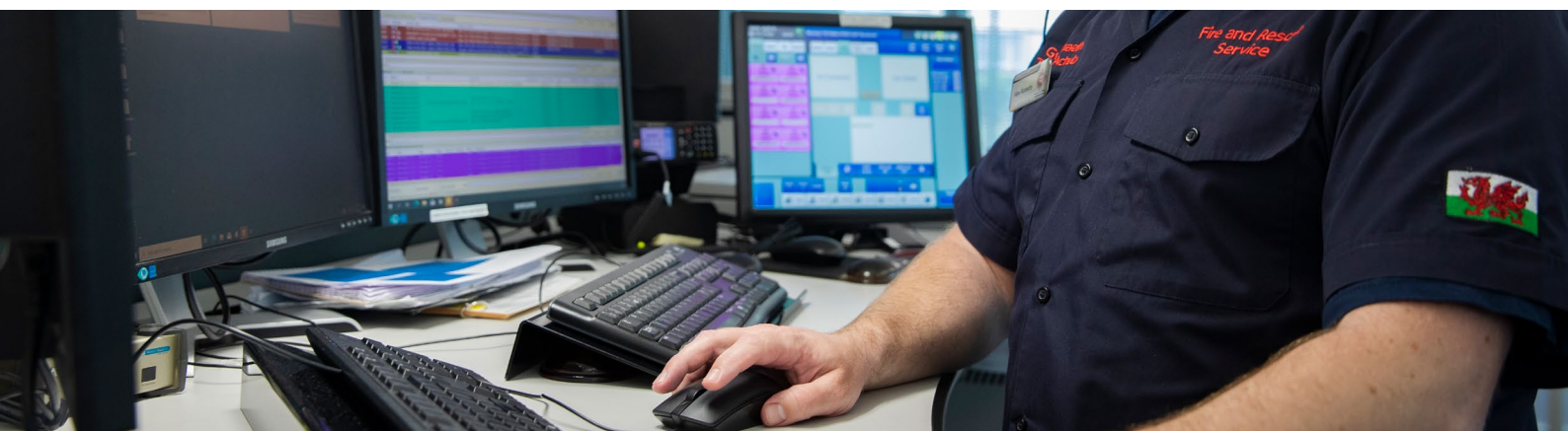
## Managing risks and performance through robust internal control and strong public financial management

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



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

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



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

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

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

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



# Governance Improvement Action Plan 2023/24

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

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

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



# Compliance with the Financial Management Code

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

**Signed**

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**(Treasurer) 2023**

# Governance Opinion and Conclusion

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

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

**Signed**

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**(Chair) 2023**

**Signed**

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**(Chief Fire Officer) 2023**



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



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