

AWDURDOD TÂN AC ACHUB GOGLEDD CYMRU



NORTH WALES FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY

A meeting of the **EXECUTIVE PANEL** will be held **MONDAY 16 DECEMBER 2024** virtually **via Zoom** commencing at **14:00 hrs.**

Yours faithfully,
Gareth Owens
Clerk

AGENDA

1. Apologies

2. Declaration of Interests

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 2024

5. Matters Arising

6. Budget Setting 2025-26

7. Performance Monitoring Report Q2 2024-25

8. Triannual benchmarking of the Chief Fire Officer's salary

9. Strategic Risk Management

10. 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 3 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.

NORTH WALES FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY
EXECUTIVE PANEL

Minutes of the **Executive Panel** of the North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority held on Monday 16 September 2024, virtually via Zoom. Meeting commenced at 14.00hrs.

Councillor

Cllr Dylan Rees (Chair)
Cllr Carol Beard
Cllr Chrissy Gee
Cllr Chris Hughes
Cllr Gareth A Roberts
Cllr Rondo Roberts (left 14:37)
Cllr Paul Rogers (from 14:19)
Cllr Gareth Sandilands
Cllr Rob Triggs

Representing

Ynys Môn County Council
Conwy County Borough Council
Flintshire County Council
Conwy County Borough Council
Gwynedd County Council
Wrexham County Council
Wrexham County Council
Denbighshire County Council
Gwynedd Council

Also present:

Dawn Docx
Stewart Forshaw
Helen MacArthur
Justin Evans
Dafydd Edwards
Anthony Jones
Tracey Williams
Gareth Owens
George Jones
Ellie Williams

Chief Fire Officer
Deputy Chief Fire Officer
Assistant Chief Fire Officer
Assistant Chief Fire Officer
Treasurer
Area Manager
Head of Corporate Communications
Clerk and Monitoring Officer
Atebol - Translator
Executive Assistant

1.0 APOLOGIES

Councillor

Cllr John Ifan Jones

Representing

Anglesey County Council

ABSENT

Councillor

Cllr Paul Cunningham (Deputy Chair)
Cllr Alan Hughes
Cllr Dale Selvester

Representing

Flintshire County Council
Denbighshire County Council
Flintshire County 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 was no notice of urgent matters.

4.0 MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 17 JUNE 2024

4.1 The minutes of the meeting held on 17 June 2024 were submitted for approval.

4.2 RESOLVED to:

- i) approve the minutes as a true and correct record of the meeting held.**

5.0 MATTERS ARISING

5.1 CFO Docx advised Members on the Audit Wales report which was published 10th September and will be formally presented to the Fire and Rescue Authority in October.

6.0 NEW TRAINING CENTRE OPTIONS (PRESENTATION)

6.1 ACFO Evans presented the New Training Centre options to Members.

6.2 NWFRS faces significant challenges as risk in our communities evolve. The need to adapt training to suit these changes is pivotal in order to uphold our duty to protect firefighters and the public. Studies have linked occupational firefighting with specific cancers, highlighting the importance of this issue.

6.3 Achieving high quality output and operational efficiency during times of crisis requires high quality training.

6.4 Essential works were completed at the Dolgellau site last year however, complaints from the public in relation to smoke generated from lighted fires during training have escalated to Welsh Government level. In addition, inadequate changing facilities for female firefighters has often meant they must choose between dignity or their health.

6.5 There are developing proposals to open a centralised training facility in North Wales which meets our core needs. A site has been identified and completion of purchase is close.

- 6.6 ACFO Evans advised a full business plan with four options will be presented to the FRA 21st October to ensure Members are fully sighted and briefed on each option, the plan will include a detailed budget forecast for each option.
- 6.7 The Chair met with the FBU who are engaged in this process, stating there has never been a more necessary time. Recommendations following the enquiry into Grenfell raised concerns on inadequate training.
- 6.8 Deputy Chair thanked ACFO Evans for the presentation and expressed support for the proposed plans and the need for providing high quality training.
- 6.9 DCFO Forshaw expressed support for the plans, the long-term vision and the need for firefighters to receive immersive and realistic training. Risks in relation to contaminates and lithium iron continue to emerge despite us not having the facilities to train and the reduced incidents we are attending gives less opportunity to expand on training and experience.
- 6.10 Cllr Sandilands raised the strained economic climate we are currently facing stipulating the need to outlay the expense on a short- and long-term basis. The need for the decision to be made based on sound finances was raised.
- 6.11 CFO Docx thanked Cllr Sandilands for raising this issue and advised this will be incorporated in the business case presented to the FRA on 21st October.

6.12 RESOLVED to:

- i) Note the information given during the presentation.**

7.0 ANNUAL PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT 23-24

- 7.1 Area Manager Anthony Jones presented the Performance Assessment for the financial year 2023-24. Members were informed that the purpose of the report was to present Members with the APA for the period of 2023/24.
- 7.2 Section 15 of the Local Government (Wales) Measure (2009) requires the FRA to arrange the publication of the Authority's assessment of performance during the financial year by 31st October
- 7.3 Schedule 1 of the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act (2015) requires each public body to publish annual reports on progress made in satisfying wellbeing objectives.

- 7.4 Chair thanked AJ for the detailed report provided to Members. The Chair queried if there was any data relating to the Safe-call section and if we knew how many people have contacted us.
- 7.5 AJ advised we can look into reporting on this and providing this data in future meetings.

7.6 RESOLVED to:

- i) Members noted the contents of the Annual Performance Assessment for the period of 2023/24.**
- ii) Members approved the Annual Performance Assessment 2023/24 for publication on the Fire and Rescue Authority's website.**

8.0 PERFORMANCE MONITORING REPORT Q1 2024-25

- 8.1 Area Manager Anthony Jones delivered the Performance Monitoring report for Q1 period. Members were informed that the purpose of the report was to provide comparative data relating to the Fire and Rescue Authority's 'Our 5 Principles for keeping communities safe' for the first quarter of the 2024/25 financial year. The report also contains commentary on activity and proposed activity associated with the principles.
- 8.2 The report highlights emerging trends in both increased, reduced and new demands. In addition, the report underpins the development of new or revised activity to mitigate increasing or emergent demand and risk.
- 8.3 Cllr GS queried if we compare our absenteeism and sickness rates with other UK Authorities. Sickness rates could be affected by the changes we have recently gone through.
- 8.4 AJ advised the comparisons drawn were specific to Wales during this stage.
- 8.5 Further questions emerged on measures being undertaken to reduce sickness in the coming months.
- 8.6 It was highlighted that our statistics in relation to bugs and norovirus are in line with All Wales figures and that we continue to monitor this in consequent quarters whilst providing robust packages.

8.7 ACFO MacArthur advised on the person-centred approach applied to each case of sickness, this approach is monitored by various attendance groups, occupational health management support, employee assistance programme and dedicated mental health support. We offer return to work opportunities where possible including the option of a different department until a full return to work is possible.

8.8 The Chair highlighted this report as new to Members who had requested this information and looked forward to seeing the results of Q2.

8.9 RESOLVED to:

- i) Members noted the contents of the performance monitoring report.**

9.0 URGENT MATTERS

9.1 There were no urgent matters to report.

Meeting closed: 14:49 hrs

\Mae'r ddogfen yma ar gael yn Gymraeg

Agenda Item 6

Report to	Executive Panel	
Date	16 December 2024	
Lead Officer	Helen MacArthur, Assistant Chief Fire Officer	
Contact Officer	Elgan Roberts, Head of Finance and Procurement	
Subject	Budget Setting 2025-26	

PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1 The purpose of this report is to provide Members with an update on the current financial planning assessment to set a balanced budget for 2025/26, and to seek endorsement to confirm the indicative levy with constituent local authorities.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 2 North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority (the Authority) is required to provide indicative figures for the 2025/26 financial levy to constituent local authorities by 31 December 2024, and confirm the final figures by 15 February 2025. To achieve this, the Authority will consider the revenue and capital budget for 2025/26 at its meeting on 20 January 2025. The budget planning process has been subject to scrutiny by the Budget Scrutiny Working Group and the current planning assessment of £52.389m has been confirmed

RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3 It is recommended that Members:
 - i) Note the findings of the Budget Scrutiny Working Group, including the planning assumptions being used to develop the revenue budget for 2025/26;
 - ii) Note the current financial planning assessment of a budget requirement of £52.389m for 2025/26;
 - iii) Note the proposal to utilise £0.601m of reserves for 2025/26; and
 - iv) Endorse the communication of the draft financial levy of £51.788m from the constituent local authorities.

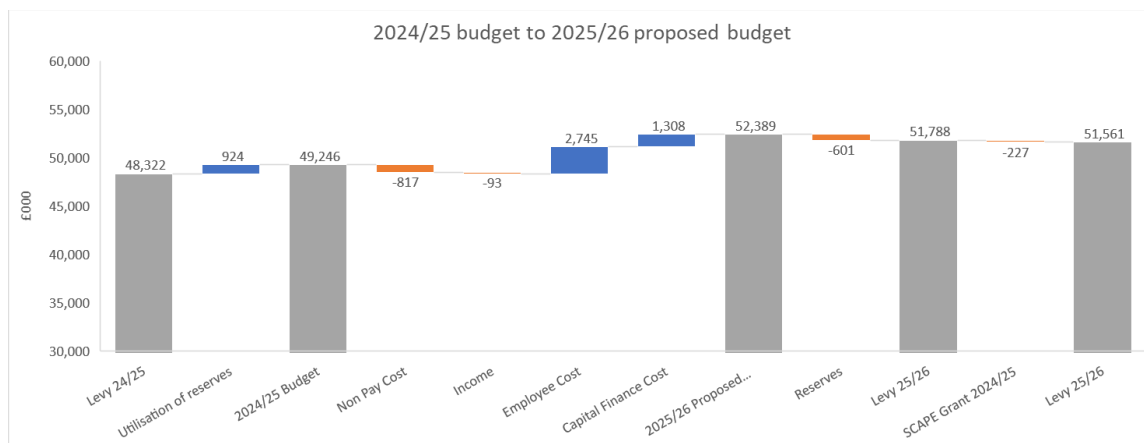
BACKGROUND

- 4 Each year the Authority is required to set a balanced revenue budget which must be approved by the full Authority. The indicative financial levy must be communicated to constituent local authorities by the 31 December each year and the final levy confirmed by the 15 of February before the commencement of the financial year. To achieve these timescales, the 2025/26 proposed revenue and capital budgets will be presented to the Authority at its meeting on 20 January 2025.
- 5 The Chartered Institute of Public Finance (CIPFA) requires that organisations have financial plans which demonstrate how expenditure will be funded over the short and medium term. The Authority's financial sustainability is, therefore, underpinned by knowledge and understanding of the key cost drivers and evaluation of risks and uncertainties.
- 6 Following the ECR consultation conducted during 2023/24 and in line with the Authority's decision in December 2023, the budget proposals are based on maintaining the existing service delivery model. The work around proposals to improve rural availability is ongoing and outside of the scope of this budget setting paper.
- 7 The process has been overseen by the Budget Scrutiny Working Group (the Group) which was established to provide scrutiny of the budget setting process, including all areas of income and expenditure. With membership from each local authority, the Group has met on 5 occasions between June and November 2024, with a further meeting scheduled for the 12 December.

INFORMATION

- 8 The Group was established by the Authority with representation from each constituent local authority. It has convened on five occasions to review all aspects of the North Wales Fire and Rescue Service's (the Service) expenditure. These meetings focused on key areas, including direct pay costs, non-pay expenditure, capital financing, interest, and lease arrangements.
- 9 Detailed budget planning has been conducted in line with the key planning assumptions, risks, and uncertainties outlined in [Appendix 1](#).
- 10 The initial planning assessment indicated that a budget increase exceeding 10% would be required for the 2025/26 financial year. This included a new cost pressure of £1.009m arising from the nationally agreed increase to the retaining fee for RDS personnel. This was made prior to the Autumn Statement and, therefore, did not account for potential changes to employers' national insurance contributions, which were unknown at the time.

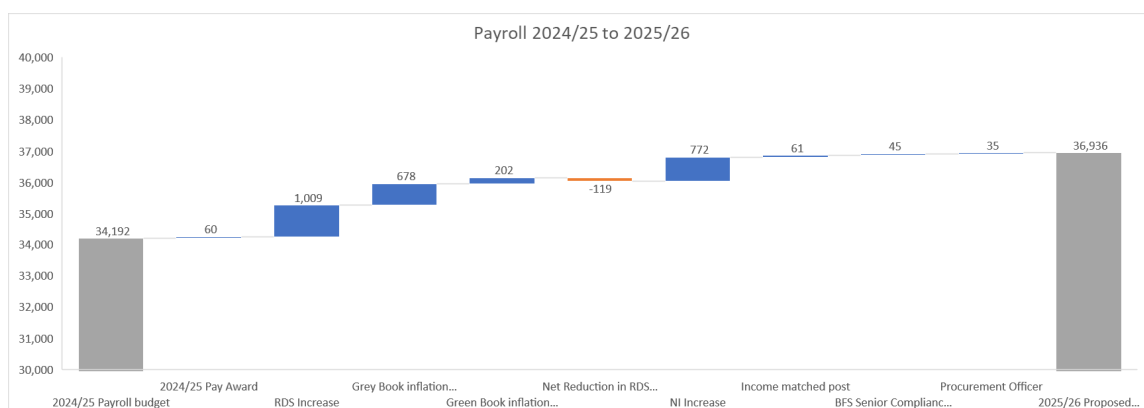
- 11 The initial detailed budget planning identified additional unavoidable pressures, which have since been addressed through the efforts of the Group. The final draft assessment establishes a budget requirement of £52.389m. After utilising £0.601m from reserves, the levy requirement for 2025/26 is £51.788m, representing a 7% gross increase in the local authority levy. This increase does not reflect any support from the government in respect of increased national insurance costs.



- 12 The levy requirement of £51.78m for 2025/26 incorporates the financial impact of changes to employers' National Insurance contributions, amounting to £0.772m. Furthermore, the £48.322m levied for 2024/25 exclude the SCAPE pension grant, and requires adjustment to make a like for like year on year comparison.
- 13 A draft breakdown of the levy requirement of £51.788m by each constituent local authority is set out within [Appendix 2](#).
- 14 The table below confirms reductions of £0.902m for employee and non-pay cost identified through the work of the Group between September and October 2024. However, the net reduction was £0.386m due to the impact of the increase to National Insurance rates following the Autumn budget statement and refinement of capital financing.

£'m	2024/25	Sept-24	Oct-24	Nov-24	Changes via Budget Scrutiny
Employees	34.192	36.751	36.614	36.936	0.185
Non-Pay	12.807	13.077	12.432	11.990	-1.087
Income	-0.946	-1.039	-1.039	-1.039	0.000
Capital Finance	3.193	3.985	3.856	4.407	0.516
Total	49.246	52.774	51.863	52.388	-0.386

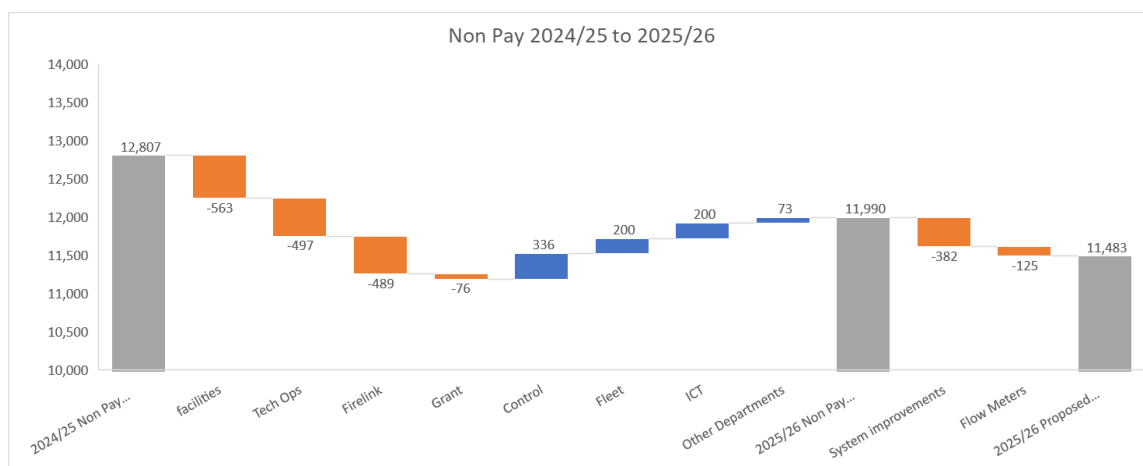
- 15 The following waterfall charts illustrate the key changes between the 2024/25 budget and the proposed 2025/26 budget, highlighting the adjustments and the utilisation of reserves where applicable and appropriate.
- 16 Employee costs have risen from the 2024/25 payroll budget of £34.192m to the proposed 2025/26 payroll budget of £36.936m. Key contributors to this increase include £0.060m for the 2024/25 pay award for Green Book staff, £1.009m for the Retained Duty System (RDS) effective from the 1 January 2025, £0.648m for Grey Book inflation at 3%, £0.202m for Green Book inflation at 3%, and £0.772m reflecting the impact of changes to employers' National Insurance contributions. These increases are partially offset by a reduction of £0.119m due to adjustments in RDS positions (reducing the assumed additional recruitment from 30 to 15). Additionally, £0.061m is allocated to cover an income matched post, £0.045m allocated for the introduction of a Business Fire Safety (BFS) Senior Compliance Officer post, and £0.035m for a Procurement Officer role.



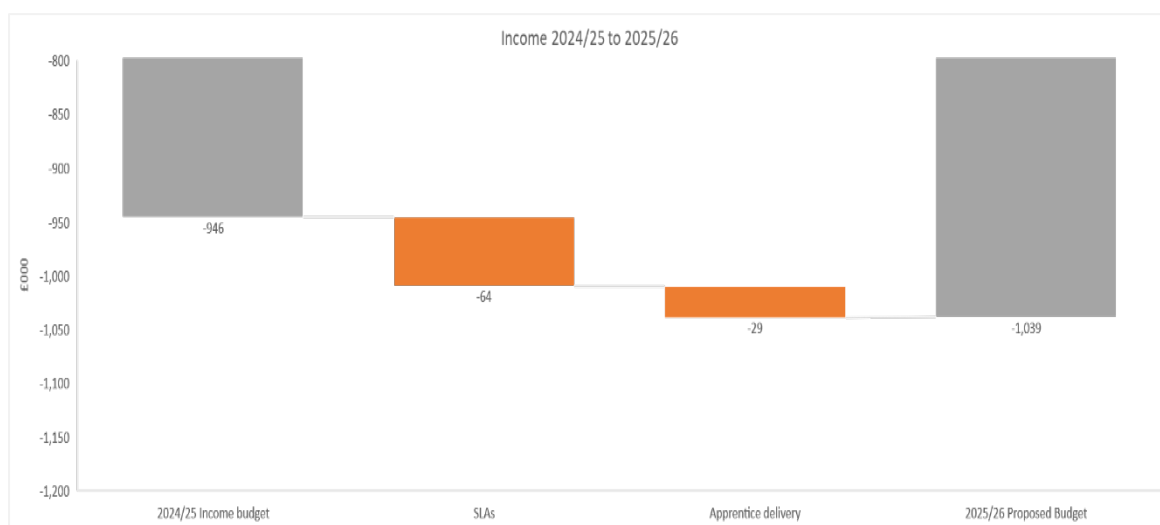
- 17 The analysis of direct payroll costs, detailed below, confirms a total allocation of £36.936m for employees in service delivery roles. The budget planning includes provisions to support the continued growth of the Retained Duty System (RDS), albeit with a reduced additional recruitment assumption of 15, ensuring operational response capacity and resilience are maintained.

Analysis of Direct Pay Costs	2025/26 £'m
Delivery of Response Services	31.267
Delivery of Protection and Prevention Services	2.712
Corporate Services	2.957
Staffing Budget Requirement	36.936

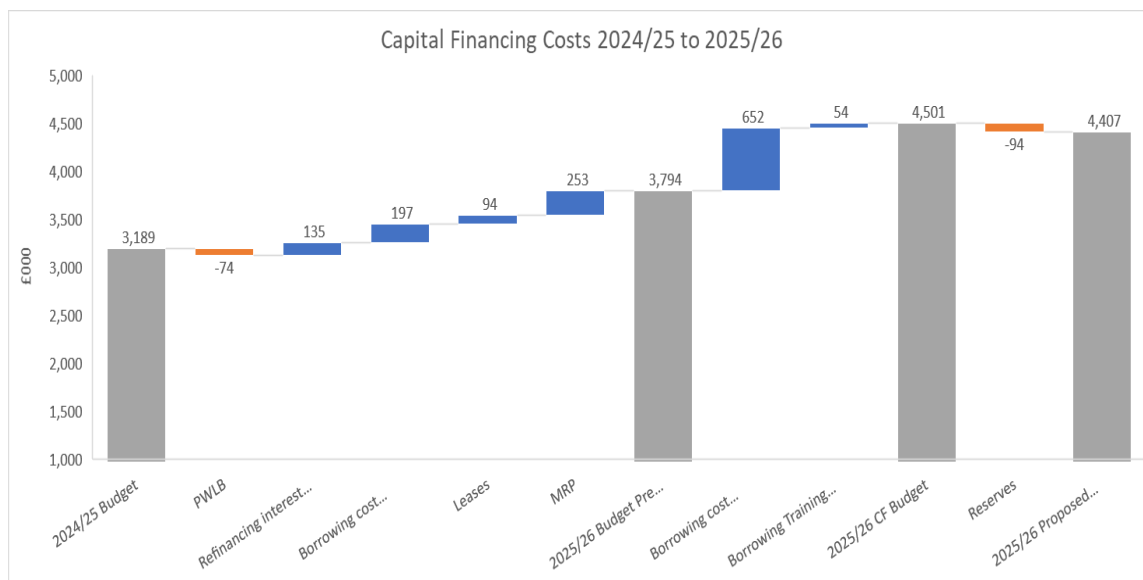
- 18 Non-pay costs are projected to decrease from £12.807m in 2024/25 to a revised baseline of £11.990m for 2025/26. This reduction is driven by £0.563m in utility savings, £0.497m from the removal of one-off Tech Ops expenditures, £0.489m from anticipated Firelink cost reductions, and £0.076m due to the cessation of grant-funded expenditure.
- 19 These reductions are partially offset by increases of £0.336m for Control, £0.200m each for Fleet and ICT, and £0.055m for other departmental costs. One-off costs, including £0.382m for system improvements and £0.125m for flow meters, are proposed to be funded from reserves, resulting in a final proposed non-pay budget of £11.955m.



- 20 Income is projected to increase from the 2024/25 budget of £0.946m to £1.039m, driven by higher revenue from Service Level Agreements (SLAs) and additional income anticipated from apprentice delivery in partnership with Coleg Cambria.



- 21 Capital financing costs are projected to increase from £3.189m in 2024/25 to £4.407m in 2025/26, primarily due to rising interest rates. Key drivers include £0.135m in refinancing interest costs, £0.197m for borrowing related to capital projects, £0.094m for leases, and £0.253m for the Minimum Revenue Provision. Additional borrowing costs for new capital projects and training facilities contribute £0.652m and £0.054m, respectively. These increases are partially offset by a £0.074m reduction in Public Works Loan Board (PWLB) costs and £0.094m utilisation of reserves, resulting in the proposed budget of £4.407m.



FURTHER WORK

- 22 Business cases for capital funding will undergo further internal scrutiny to ensure they align with the organisation's strategic objectives, effectively mitigate risks, and comply with the principles of the Well-being of Future Generations Act 2015. This process will provide assurance that proposed investments contribute to long-term sustainability, deliver value for money, and support the wider goals of economic, environmental, and social well-being.
- 23 The draft financial planning assessment will be subject to further refinement and updated in the final assessment presented to the Authority at its meeting on 20 January 2025.

IMPLICATIONS

Well-being Objectives	This report links to the Authority's Improvement and Well-being Objectives. It reports on the financial viability of the Authority.
Budget	The initial planning assessment has indicated a budget requirement of £52.8m.
Legal	The Authority has a legal duty to set a balanced budget based on realistic planning assumptions.
Staffing	70% of expenditure relates to staff costs and therefore is a material factor when considering future financial stability. The risks identified by the Chief Fire Officer include ongoing pay negotiations as well as the need to recruit further retained duty staff and build corporate resilience.
Equalities/Human Rights/Welsh Language	These issues will be factored into budget setting proposals.
Risks	The key risks and uncertainties to the 2025/26 budget have been outlined in Appendix 1.

Appendix 1
Summary of planning assumptions and risks

Heading	Planning assumptions used in budget setting	Risks/Uncertainties
Employee costs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The staffing budgets will be formulated on existing service delivery models and reflective of the decision of the outcome of the Fire and Rescue Authority's Emergency Cover Review in December 2023. • RDS expenditure has been based on the 2023/24 headcount. Budgeting for the full required establishment would result in an additional cost of approximately £3 million. • The planning assessment for pay awards for 2025/26 is an increase of 3% for all staff groups. • The 2024/25 firefighter settlement included an uplift of circa 50% in the retaining fee paid to firefighters on the retained and day crewing duty systems. The impact of this increase is an estimated £1m per annum. • During 2023/24 the Welsh Government revised the flow of funds in relation to financial support for increases to the employer contributions associated with the firefighters' pension scheme. Following the 2016 actuarial valuations £1.1m of support was provided to the Authority directly from the Welsh Government (known as SCAPE funding). From 2023/24 this has been included within funding to constituent local authorities. At the time of writing the financial support for the increase arising from the 2020 valuation has not yet been confirmed. For the purpose of budget setting all costs are included within expenditure to be met from the levy. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The National Joint Council (NJC) has not yet reached agreement on the firefighter pay award for 2025/26. • The National Joint Council (NJC) for Local Government Services has not yet reached agreement on the pay award for staff on LGPS contracts for 2025/26. • 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.


Heading	Planning assumptions used in budget setting	Risks/Uncertainties
Non-Pay	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The initial planning assessment has confirmed that the non-pay budgets will be formulated on existing service delivery models. • The demands on the non-pay budget are further exacerbated by the inflationary impact inherent within existing and future contracts and supply chain issues in a number of business-critical areas. These include the supply of firefighting kit and the sourcing of replacement parts for operational vehicles. • Unavoidable costs associated with industry specific health and safety matters have been included within the non-pay budget. These include costs associated with the training of operational firefighters and the management of contaminants. • Budgets have been formulated by each relevant Head of Department based on their knowledge and professional judgement of expenditure necessary to achieve corporate objectives. This includes a review of underlying contractual obligations and estimates of activity. New requests for funding over £10,000 are subject to a business case which is subject to scrutiny. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 and uncertainty. In particular, it has been noted that delays in the delivery of goods or services have impacted on the time profiles of expenditure. • Although cost inflation is generally more manageable than in recent years it is noted that some areas of concern remain. This includes increases in licences associated with software including business critical systems. • The cost of gas and electricity has been a known cost pressure since 2022/23 due to global cost pressures. The position appears to have stabilised and the budget for 2025/26 is predicated on best estimates at this time. However, volatility in the market continues and this is carefully managed throughout the financial year. • During 2023/24 the Welsh Government removed its financial support of £0.4m for the existing national emergency services communication network (Firelink). The full contract price is now funded directly from core funding. Due to the fixed nature of this contract these costs are unavoidable and the contract includes an annual inflationary increase. The full year cost is £1m per annum although following a national legal challenge this may reduce to £0.5m. The national legal challenge is subject to appeal and the final outcome remains uncertain, however, the cost reduction has been included as part of budget setting.

Heading	Planning assumptions used in budget setting	Risks/Uncertainties
Capital Financing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The capital financing requirement for 2025/26 includes the revenue charge for the minimum revenue provision for existing assets and an estimate of the interest charges arising from borrowing. These costs are influenced by historical capital expenditure, the need to borrow for the 2025/26 capital programme and the impact of interest rate increases when re-financing maturing loans. • The initial planning assessment assumes that all future borrowing will be at the prevailing PWLB rate at the time of budget setting, currently estimated at 4.5%. The Authority receives independent advice and guidance on this matter from Arlingclose, a specialist advisory company. • The capital plan includes potential costs associated with business cases submitted by each Head of Department. This includes some provision for initial costs associated with the Training Centre Project to enable a detailed business case and funding model to be developed. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The increase in interest rates in recent years is a key risk area and is exacerbated as a number of loans require refinancing during the 2025/26 financial year. Financial modelling will be undertaken to assess the affordability of all proposals during the budget setting process. • The timing of any costs associated with a new training centre are unknown at this stage as the business case has not been considered by the Authority. Although it is not anticipated that the final business case and funding options will not be presented for approval until 2027 provision for costs associated with detailed planning applications will be included in the initial budget estimates.
Income	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Income budgets have been reviewed and set in line with previous years, subject to inflationary increases. These largely relate to income from property where our sites are jointly occupied. • Welsh Government grant income reduced significantly in recent years and the budget setting will assume that remaining Welsh Government grant funding will be received at 2024/25 levels. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No specific risks have been identified over and above the grant income from the Welsh Government for which inflationary uplifts are not anticipated.

Appendix 2

Draft financial levy by local authority

Authority	2024/2025 Contribution £	Population	Apportionment %	2025/26 Budget Requirement (Levy) £	Increase in Levy £	Increase in Levy %
Anglesey Council	4,848,293	69,291	10.02%	5,190,383	342,090	7.06%
Gwynedd Council	8,256,681	119,173	17.24%	8,926,896	670,214	8.12%
Conwy County Borough Council	8,024,901	114,410	16.55%	8,570,114	545,213	6.79%
Denbighshire County Council	6,779,844	97,156	14.05%	7,277,668	497,824	7.34%
Flintshire County Council	10,905,762	155,182	22.45%	11,624,223	718,461	6.59%
Wrexham County Borough Council	9,506,724	136,149	19.69%	10,198,518	691,794	7.28%
Total	48,322,205	691,361	100%	51,787,801	3,465,596	7.17%

Report to	Executive Panel	
Date	16 December 2024	
Lead Officer	Stewart Forshaw, Deputy Chief Fire Officer	
Contact Officer	Anthony Jones, Head of Planning, Performance and Transformation	
Subject	Performance Monitoring Report Q2 2024-25	

Purpose of Report

- 1 To provide comparative data relating to the North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority's (the Authority) 'Our 5 Principles for keeping communities safe' for the first half of the 2024/25 financial year. The report also contains commentary on activity and proposed activity associated with the principles.
- 2 To highlight emerging trends in both increased, reduced and new demands.
- 3 To inform the development of new or revised activity to mitigate any increasing and emergent demand and risk.

Summary

- 4 Fires decreased significantly compared to the same period last year (1,016 to 844), however the number of false alarms rose marginally (1,517 to 1,625).
- 5 Accidental Dwelling Fires remain at their lowest compared with the last five years' data (138).
- 6 North Wales Fire and Rescue Service (the Service) has completed a significantly high number of SAWCs during the first two quarters of the financial year (10,093).
- 7 Hospital AFAs calls continue to reduce, whilst the number of calls to HMP Berwyn has risen.

Recommendation

- 8 It is recommended that Members:
 - i) note the content of the performance monitoring report.

Information

- ii) A new topic has been added to the report this quarter regarding Emerging Technologies. This will form part of the 'Our Response Principle' section, and will remain a permanent part of the report going forward.

Well-being Objectives	Helps the Authority to monitor its performance against the improvement and well-being objectives in the Community Risk Management Implementation Plan 2024-25.
Budget	No direct budget implications. However, reporting allows the Authority to consider any potential impacts on budget due to unanticipated incident activity.
Legal	Supports the Authority, as required by the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015, to demonstrate how it is taking all reasonable steps, in exercising its functions, to meet its well-being objectives.
Staffing	No staffing implications. However, aligning reporting to the Authority's CRMP will be more efficient.
Equalities/Human Rights/Welsh Language	No implication identified.
Risks	No risk implications



Gwasanaeth Tân ac Achub
Fire and Rescue Service

North Wales Fire and Rescue Service

Monitoring Report: April 2024 – September 2024



Our five principles for keeping communities safe

PEOPLE

PREVENTION

PROTECTION

RESPONSE

ENVIRONMENT

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Our People Principle



1 Sickness Absence

According to the National Fire and Rescue Service Sickness Absence Report for April 2023 – September 2023, the average number of sickness absence duty days per staff member is 4.43, equating to 5.82%. Total time lost, for NWFRS, due to sickness absence has increased to 6.15% during quarter two.

There were 925 posts filled by 876 people during quarter two, which is an increase of 16 posts from the same period in 2023.

Please note that throughout the report, the number of cases in the year to date (YTD) will not be a sum of the quarters as some individuals' absences will span across quarters. There may also be fluctuations in the numbers reported from quarter to quarter as a result of changes to employee data.

1.1 All Sickness Absence

	Year 2023/2024			Year 2024/2025			Absence Rate Variance
	Q2 Cases	Q2 Days Lost	Q2 Lost time %	Q2 Cases	Q2 Days Lost	Q2 Lost time %	
Long Term Sickness	66	3,482	4.21%	79	4,318	5.13%	↑ 0.92%
Short Term Sickness	123	769	0.93%	135	861	1.02%	↑ 0.09%
Total	189	4,251	5.14%	214	5,179	6.15%	↑ 1.01%

During quarter two, the number of short-term absence days has increased, although the number of cases has remained the same as quarter one of 2024/25. Short term absence accounted for 1.02% of time lost across all duty types, an increase of 0.09% from the same period in the previous year. The number of long-term sickness cases has also increased in comparison with the same period in the previous year, with long term absence now accounting for 5.13% of time lost.

Short term means individual periods of sickness of 27 calendar days or less.

Long term means individual periods of 28 calendar days or more.

Some duty systems may see a higher percentage of lost time despite fewer cases of absence being recorded. This is caused by there being fewer staff within that duty system. The sickness absence percentage calculation is proportionate to the number of staff within that duty system.

1.2 Short Term Sickness

Short Term Sickness equates to 1.02% of lost time during quarter two.

	2023/24 - Q2 Cases	2023/24 - Q2 Days lost	2023/24 - Q2 Lost time %	2024/25 - Q2 Cases	2024/25 - Q2 Days lost	2024/25 - Q2 Lost time %
Wholetime*	39	263	1.05%	50	354	1.42%
RDS /On-Call	57	346	0.81%	65	409	0.94%
Control	9	36	1.47%	4	18	0.68%
Corporate Departments	18	124	0.99%	16	80	0.62%
Total	123	769	0.93%	135	861	1.02%

(*Wholetime - includes all operational staff, such as station based, rural and flexi duty officers)

(SLT have been split so operational members of SLT are included within wholetime figures, and Heads of Departments are included within Corporate Departments).

Top 3 Short Term Sickness Absence Reasons (Cases)

	Absence Reason	Cases	Lost time %
1	Cold, Flu	26	10.9%
2	Mental Health – Stress	9	15.3%
3	Musculoskeletal – Upper Limb	9	10.7%

Lost time is based upon the days lost rather than the case numbers

The reasons for absence above are across all duty types.

The highest number of short-term absence cases were due to 'cold/flu' reasons, however short-term absence due to 'mental health – stress' accounted for the highest number of days lost during quarter two.

Whilst not a top three absence reason, the number of employees absent due to 'vomiting and diarrhoea' was at an increased rate than that in the same period in 2023/24. It was also noted within the NHS analysis data that the total number of norovirus laboratory results remained at a higher than average rate in July and August, with September now starting to show a decrease.

1.3 Long Term Sickness

Long Term sickness equates to an average of 5.13% of lost time during quarter two.

Long Term Sickness	2023/24 – Q2 Cases	2023/24 – Q2 Days lost	2023/24 – Q2 Lost time %	2024/25 – Q2 Cases	2024/25 – Q2 Days lost	2024/25 – Q2 Lost time %
WDS Stations	16	751	2.99%	23	1,113	4.46%
RDS /On-Call	35	2,078	4.87%	40	2,447	5.60%
Control	3	188	7.65%	4	214	8.11%
Corporate Departments	12	465	3.73%	12	544	4.21%
Total	66	3,482	4.21%	79	4,318	5.13%

Top 3 Long Term Sickness Absence Reasons (Cases)

	Absence Reason	Cases	Lost Time %
1	Musculoskeletal – Lower Limb	14	20.4%
2	Mental Health – Stress	12	11.7%
3	Failed Medical / Fitness Test	6	10.2%

Lost time is based upon the days lost rather than the case numbers

Musculoskeletal – Lower limb absence accounted for the highest number of cases and days lost for long term absence. Due to the physical nature of operational roles, employees that are absent due to musculoskeletal conditions must have fully recovered before returning to work to avoid further exacerbation or injury.

Long term absence due to mental health - stress continues to be within the top three absence reasons for long term sickness, for both quarter one and quarter two in the current year. Whilst the service has seen an increase in mental health cases, this is also reflective across the country, as reported by NHS monthly statistics bulletin. Adults accessing mental health support has increased from 1.1 million in July 2023 to 1.4 in July 2024.

Support is provided to employees who are absent due to mental health and musculoskeletal reasons, including access to occupational health, an employee assistance programme, and physiotherapy treatment. Signposting to external agencies, such as the Firefighters Charity, Parabl and other specific services is also provided to employees.

All Wales Comparison

In comparison with the other Welsh Fire and Rescue Services, North Wales had the lowest percentage of time lost due to short term absence out of all three services. North Wales had the lowest time lost due to long term absence for Fire Control staff, but was slightly higher than Mid and West Wales for wholetime uniformed staff, and was at the average level for non-operational staff, with 7.54% of time lost.

Note, the All Wales data only reported on absence data for wholetime, control and corporate staff and is for the period April 2022 to March 2023, with the next update due in October 2024 (this information was not yet available at the time of preparing the report).

Our Prevention Principle



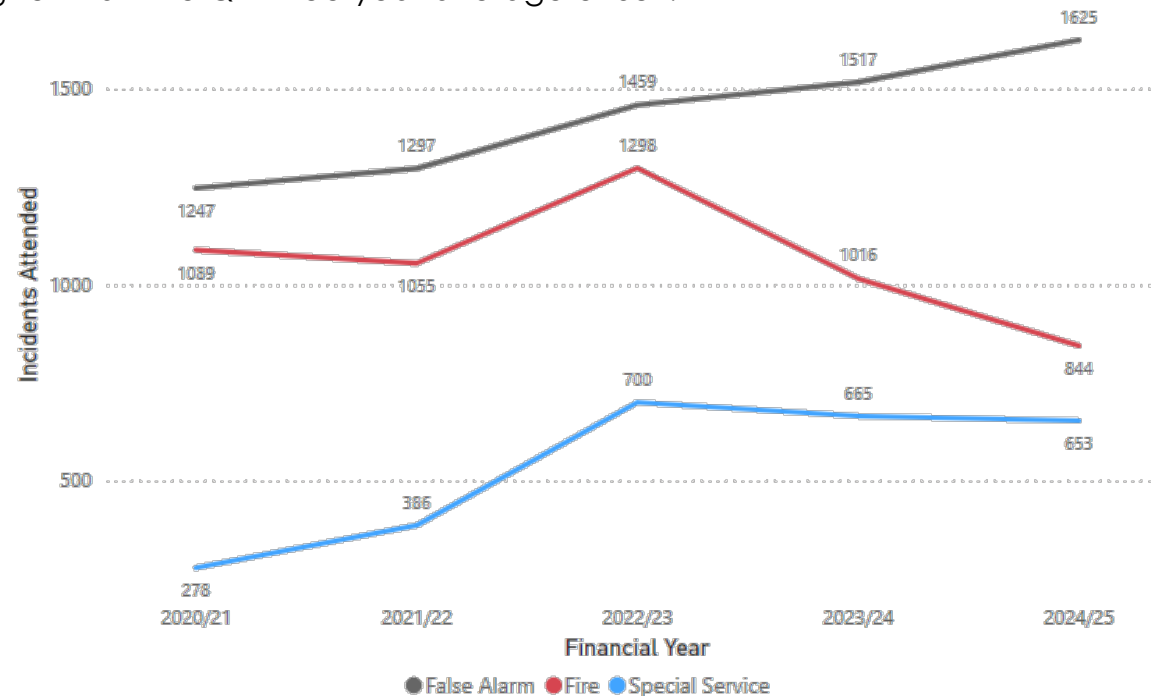
2 All Incidents

All Incidents – **3,122** incidents were attended during the first half of the financial year, which is a 2.4% decrease compared to the first two quarters of financial year 2023/24, and 0.3% below the three-year average of 3,131.

Fires – **844**, 24.8% less than the Q2 three-year average of 1,123.

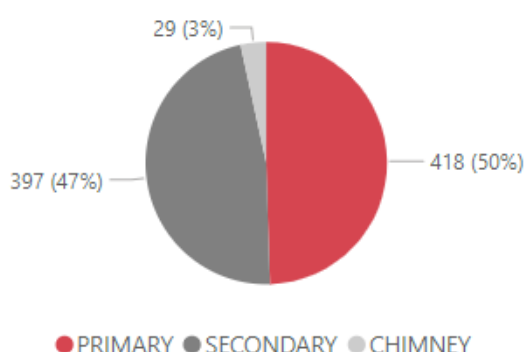
False Alarms – **1,625**, 14.1% more than the Q2 three-year average of 1,424.

SSCs – **653**, 11.8% higher than the Q2 three-year average of 584.



3 Fires, by Category and Motive

844 fires were attended; a 16.9% decrease from the 1,016 attended during Q2 of the 2023/24 financial year.



Primary Fires

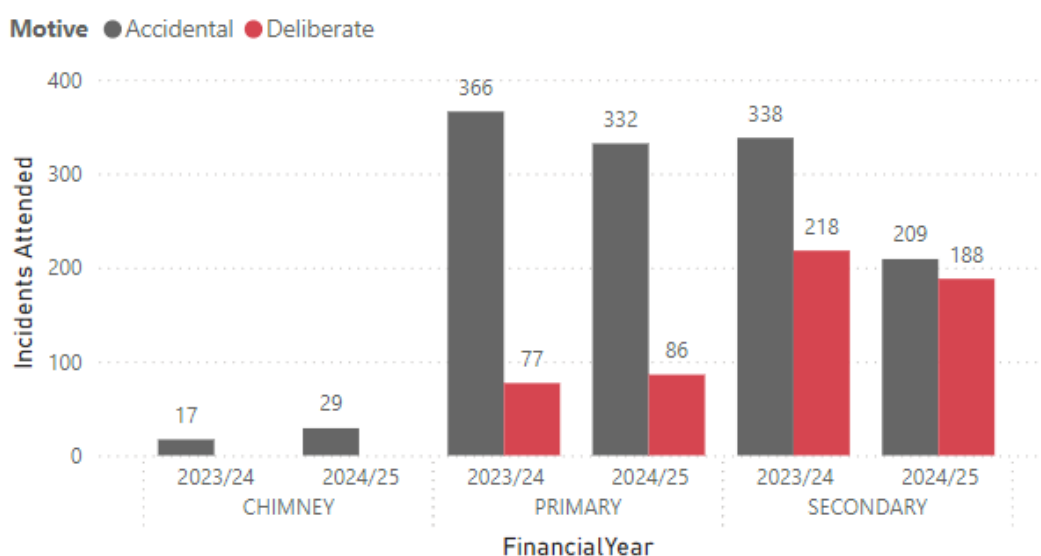
- **Accidental: 332** (79.4%).
- **Deliberate: 86** (20.6%).

Secondary Fires

- **Accidental: 209** (52.6%).
- **Deliberate: 188** (47.4%).

Chimney fires

- **29** (3.4% of all fires attended) - this is an increase of 70.6% from 17 compared with the same period last year.



Further Information on Secondary Deliberate Fires

Whilst it is clear that the Service attended a higher percentage of secondary deliberate fires proportionately to the number of secondary accidental fires compared with the same period last year, it is important to note that the number of deliberate secondary fires has still reduced, and that they are being identified in the same property categories as previous financial years ('Grassland, woodland and crops', 'Other outdoors (including land)', and 'Outdoor structures').

Actions taken to date:

- Investigation took place during Q2 regarding the continued increase in attendance at domestic AFAs.

It has long been perceived that as we are witnessing an ageing society, there will be an inevitable increase in the number of occupiers who have monitored systems. This has been confirmed by one of the major companies that covers the West and Central area of the Service.

This company was able to supply the following information:

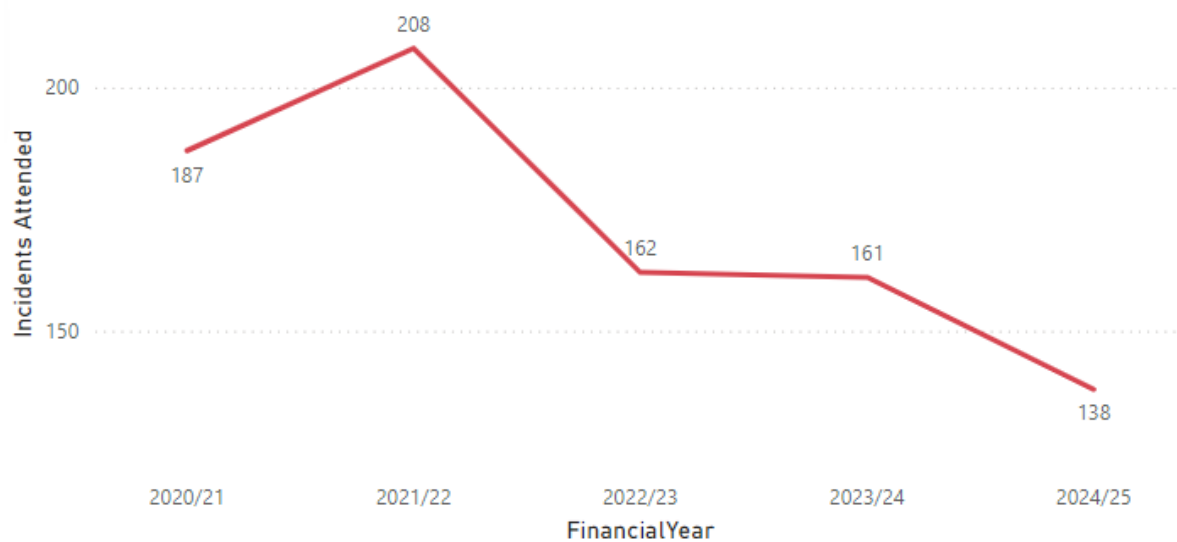
The table below indicates the number of calls (activations of monitored alarms) they receive and the number of times they call the FRS.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug
Smoke Alarm	1,653	1,537	1,824	1,842	1,763	1,868	1,928	1,557
Fire Service Called	48	51	40	58	65	81	80	62
% Passed to Fire Service	2.90%	3.32%	2.19%	3.15%	3.69%	4.34%	4.15%	3.98%

Attendance of the FRS allows us to complete a SAWC with that occupier and offer interventions and information as required.

4 Accidental Fires in Dwellings (ADFs)

138 accidental dwelling fires were attended during the first half of 2024/25, 14.3% less than the previous year (161), and 22.0% less than the three-year average of 177.



5 Main cause of accidental dwelling fires

There were numerous main causes of ADFs during the first half of the financial year.

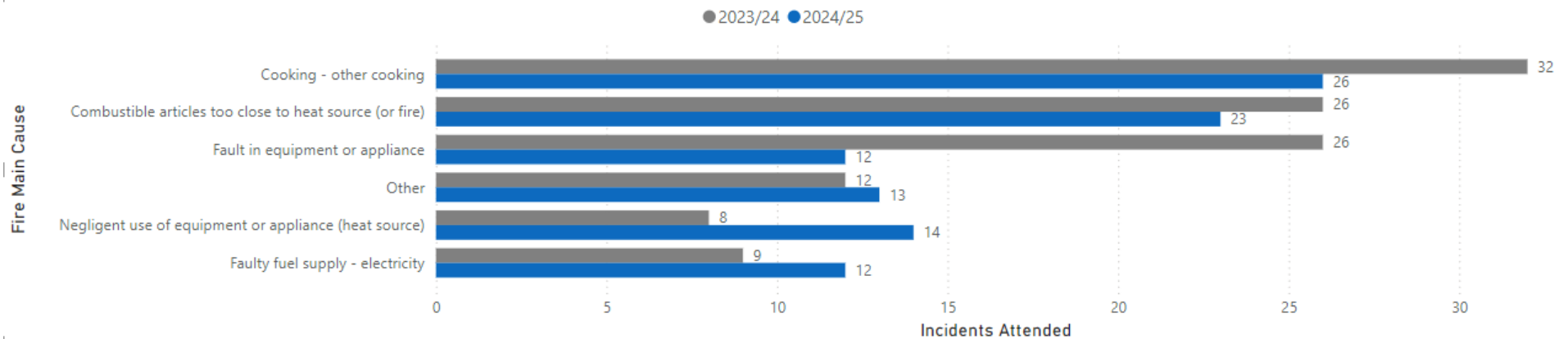
Although the most common during Q2 of 2024/25 was 'Cooking – other cooking', this still showed a 18.8% decrease from 32 to **26** compared with the same period last year.

Other main causes which saw a reduction included:

- 'Fault in equipment or appliance' which showed a significant reduction of 53.8% from 26 to **12**
- 'Careless handling – due to careless disposal' which decreased 42.9% from 14 to **eight**
- 'Cooking – chip pan/deep fat fryer' which decreased 58.3% from 12 to **five**.

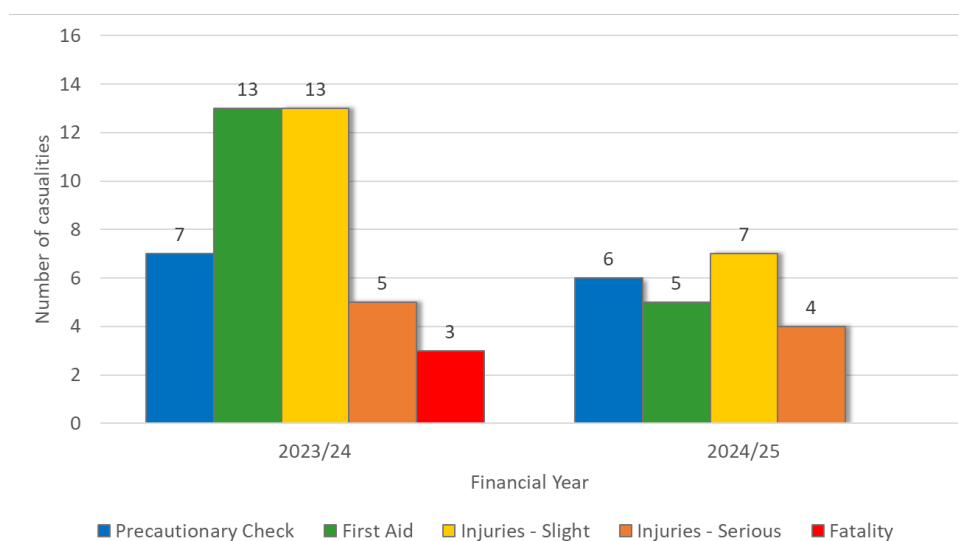
Despite this, a few main causes saw a rise during this half. These included:

- 'Faulty fuel supply – electricity' increased by 33.3% from nine to **12**
- 'Negligent use of equipment or appliance (heat source)' increased by 75.0% from eight to **14**.



6 Fatalities and Casualties from Accidental Fires in Dwellings

During Q2 of 2024/25, **22** people sustained injuries at **19** ADFs. No fatalities were recorded during the quarter.



Of the 22 casualties, **12** (54.6%) were 'Overcome by gas, smoke or toxic fumes; asphyxiation', **four** sustained slight burn injuries, **three** sustained severe burn injuries, **one** had 'Breathing difficulties (other than 'overcome by gas, smoke or toxic fumes; asphyxiation)', and **another** had a 'Combination of burns and overcome by gas/smoke'. The **one** other casualty's injury type was recorded as 'Other'.

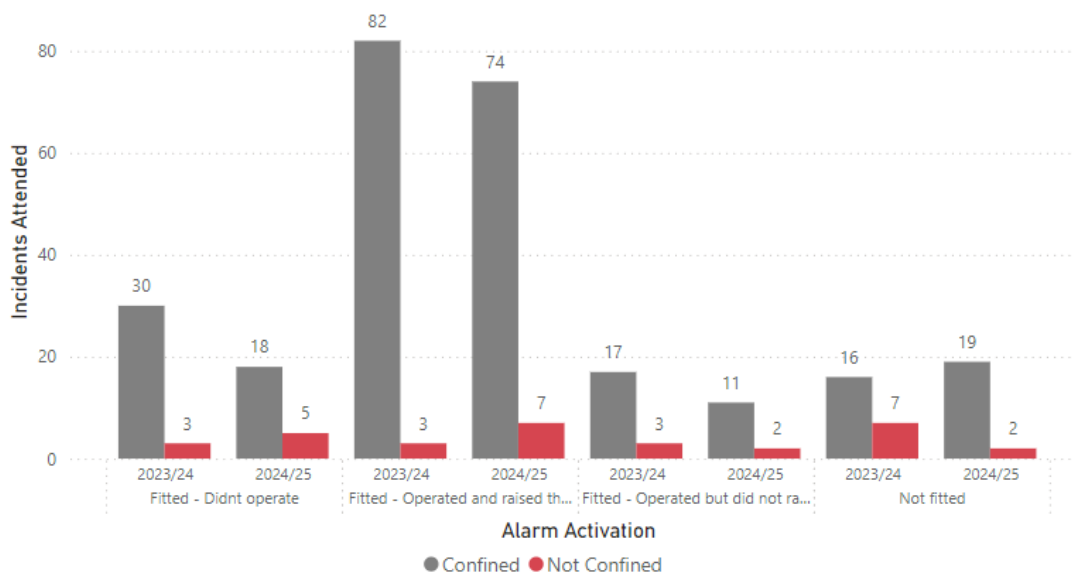
7 Smoke Detectors – Accidental Dwelling Fires

Detectors: smoke/heat detectors were present at **117** (84.8%) accidental dwelling fires attended during Q2 of financial year 2024/25.

Alarms operated and raised the alarm at **81** (58.7%) ADFs.

Alarms were not fitted at **21** of the ADFs attended.

Of the **138** ADFs attended, **122** were confined to the room of origin, and **16** were not confined.



Actions taken to support the most vulnerable to fires in their homes:

- Two-day course conduct with Denbighshire CC with homeless young people. FS teams and Operational crew involved.
- Engagement sessions run with dementia groups, university students, asylum seekers and the Traveller community.
- Numerous attendances at summer fetes, county shows and open days across the service area.
- Campaign Steering Group (CSG) continues to work with Corporate Communications to proactively promote fire, road, and water safety across all media platforms.
- Summer Safety campaigns included engagement with all identified caravan and camp sites across the service to promote safe use of BBQs and controlled burning. Contact highlighted the need to “police” their sites to discourage deliberate fire setting.
- Development of our prevention staff continues in line with the Department Objectives with at least 2 x 30 mins sessions each month using both external and internal providers.

Educational Visits to Schools

- 37 school visits, engaging with 3,888 children and young people.
 - This includes six Crucial Crew visits with engagement with 811 students.
- One Station visit engaging with 30 students.
- Three Summer club visits.

Phoenix

- Number of Phoenix courses = four
- One short intervention supporting the Skittles Course.
- Number of Phoenix participants = 35
- 100% positive feedback, 45% achieving full Agored Cymru qualifications.

Fire Setter Interventions

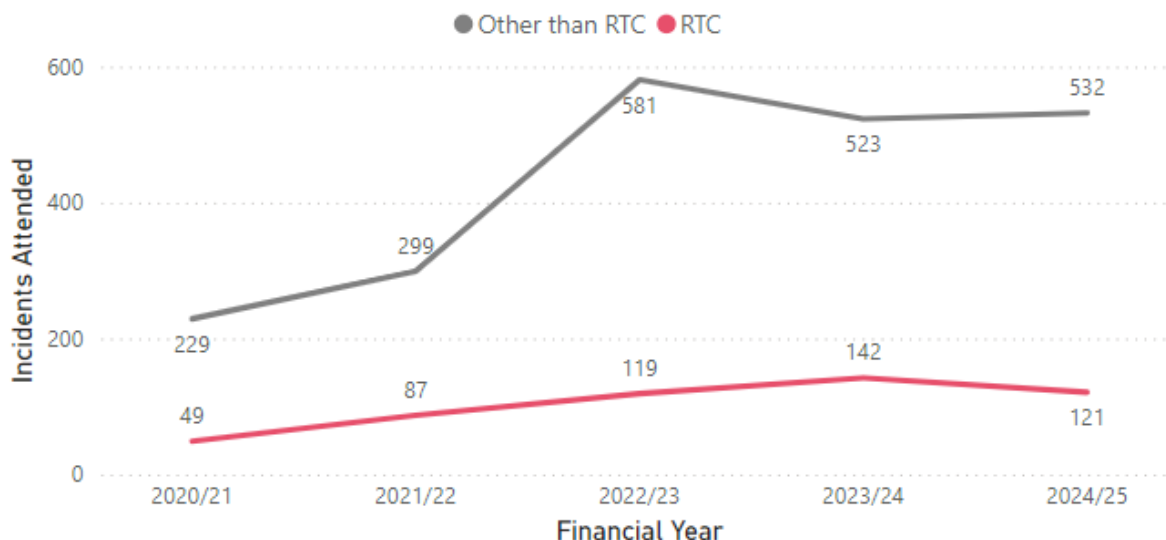
- FACE = three
- FireSafe = 10
- Adult intervention = 0

DangerPoint

- 3665 YP through the Home Safety scenario up to the end of Q2.

8 Special Service Calls (SSCs)

A total of **653** special service calls (including RTCs) were attended during Q2 of 2024/25. This is a 1.8% decrease compared with the previous financial year.



Other than RTC, categories which saw the largest **increase** in attendances included:

- **53** 'Other rescue/release of persons' incidents – an increase of 35.9% from 39.
- **30** 'Lift Release' incidents – an increase of 36.4% from 22.
- **23** 'Removal of people from objects' incidents – an increase of 27.8% from 18.
- **12** 'Rescue or evacuation from water' incidents – an increase of 33.3% from nine.
- **10** 'Hazardous Materials' incidents – an increase of 66.7% from six.
- **Four** 'Medical Incident – First Responder' incidents – an increase of 33.3% from three.

Despite this, other categories saw a **decrease** in the number of incidents attended. These included:

- **31** 'Effecting entry/exit' incidents – a decrease of 40.4% from 52.
- **29** 'Flooding' incidents – a decrease of 17.1% from 35.
- **27** 'Animal assistance' incidents – a decrease of 40.0% from 45.
- **Two** 'Other Transport' incidents – a decrease of 60.0% from five.

Actions taken to date:

- Olivia's Story is now embedded into 'StayWise' Cymru.
- Olivia's Story continues to be delivered by the FS WMs and remains current and extremely impactful.
 - Five sessions during Q2 with 61 interactions.
- Biker Down, and Biker Brew events continue and are virtually fully booked for the remainder of the year.
 - Three sessions during Q2 with 56 students.
- Op Ugain
 - 701 roadside presentations (this does not include the September figures).
 - Four prosecutions

Month	Total Number of Cars	Roadside Presentations	Prosecutions
January	356	64	0
February	7,301	192	3
March	13,422	143	1
April	12,187	109	0
May	10,745	216	1
June	13,167	324	0
July	19,311	353	0
August	12,327	348	4

Op Ugain Totals

Further Actions:

- New groups that would benefit from receiving the 'Olivia's Story' are being explored, such as Bangor and Wrexham University Students.

9 Safe and Well Checks

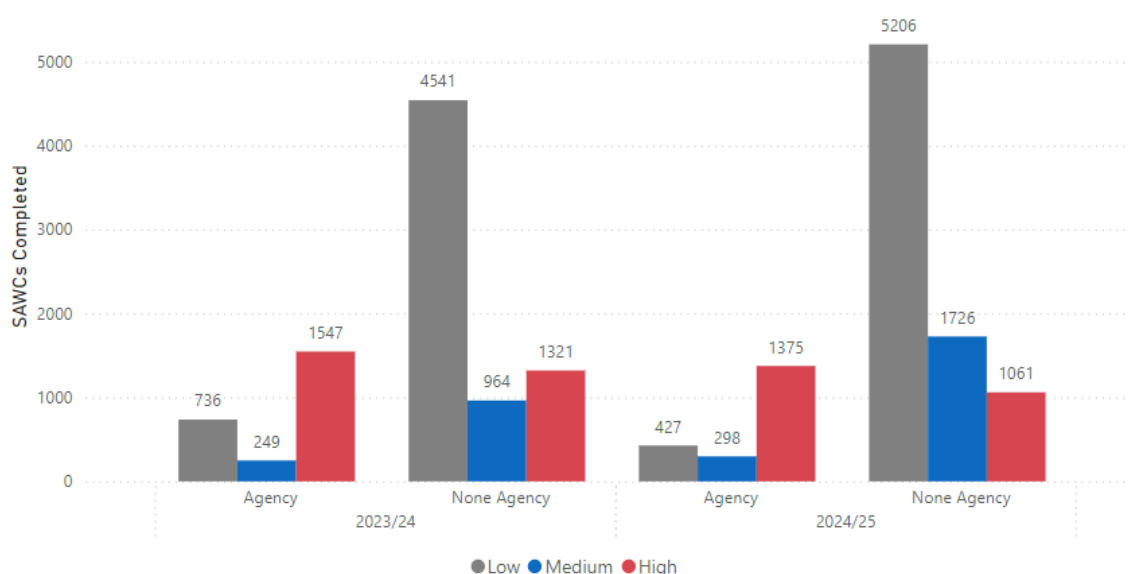
During the first half of financial year 2024/25, a total of **10,093** SAWCs were completed, of which:

- **2,436** (24.1%) were High priority, with **1,375** (56.4% of high priority checks) coming from a partner agency.
- **2,024** (20.1%) were Medium priority, with **298** (14.7% of medium priority checks) coming from a partner agency.
- **5,633** (55.8%) were Low priority, with **427** (7.6% of low priority checks) coming from a partner agency.

Whilst there has been a **7.9%** increase in the number of SAWCs completed compared with the same period last year, there has been a **15.1%** decrease in the number of high priority SAWCs completed. This is the lowest number of high priority checks conducted during the first half of the last five financial years.

Despite this however, it goes without saying that low and medium priority SAWCs completed are still valuable. Analysis of ADF casualties by age shows that the vast majority of individuals who are injured by fire are aged under 50; a group of individuals who are most likely going to fall into having a low or medium priority SAWC. The aging UK population also means that one day, those who have had a low or medium priority SAWC today, will likely become a high priority in the future, meaning the preventative work conducted today is done in anticipation of the risks the occupier will one day face.

Furthermore, many of the low priority checks may have been completed as a consequence of a street being targeted as part of the Exeter Data initiative. One street may have held many low priority households in the midst of several Exeter checks, which themselves may also have come out as being low priority.



Actions taken to date:

- Since the start of Q2 all WT/DC crews have been informed to use the same “scoring” system to correctly identify an occupier as Low, Medium or High. This will take time to effect the overall figures and may not be completely visible until 25/26, however changes are already identified as demonstrated by the increase in the number of Medium level SAWCs completed.
- Agency Seminar: An event was delivered during September where invited representatives from the main referring agencies received input from the Prevention team to help them identify our target audience. It is imperative that our referrals are as targeted as possible to ensure we have the most impact, and are able to deliver in a timely manner.
 - The Partnership Managers will now utilise this presentation to continue work locally.
- Local campaigns were conducted throughout the summer months by all three FS area teams. Locations were chosen on the basis of post incident information and available Exeter data.
- Hotspotting is monitored at the tri-weekly FS meetings. Any shortcomings are identified and dealt with accordingly.
- Impact/co working days continue to be delivered.

Further Actions:

- Work is being undertaken to match as many Exeter Data addresses to UPRNs (Unique Property Reference Numbers) as possible.
 - Corporate Planning and Performance is working to develop a solution, as well as liaising closely with NHS Wales to try and match as many addresses with ONS data.
 - To date, over 100,000 addresses have been matched to UPRNs out of the 170,000~ Exeter addresses.

Our Protection Principle

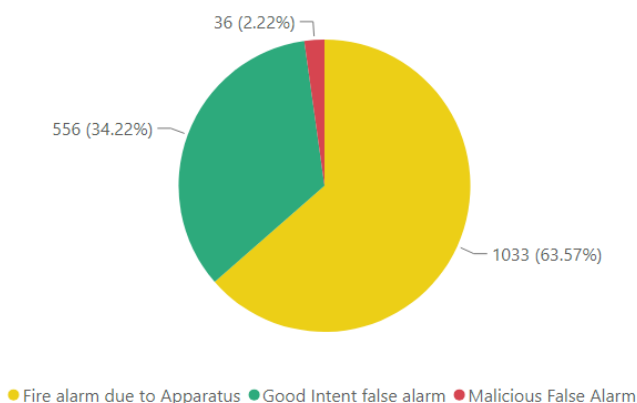


10 False Alarms

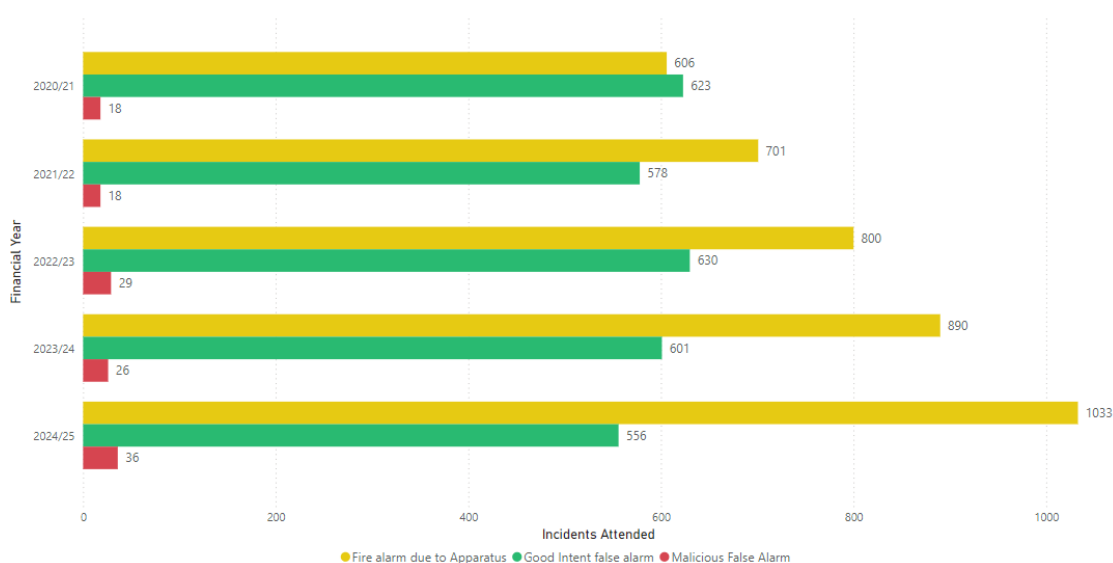
A total of **1,625** False Alarms were attended during the reporting period. This is an increase of 7.1% compared with the same period of the previous financial year.

This rise in False Alarms can be attributed to a 16.1% increase in Fire alarm due to apparatus (890 to **1,033**), as well as a 38.5% rise in Malicious False Alarms (26 to **36**). Both of these are now at their highest levels based on the last five financial years.

Good intent false alarms saw a decrease from 601 to **556**. This the lowest number of incidents of this nature recorded over the first half of the last five financial years.

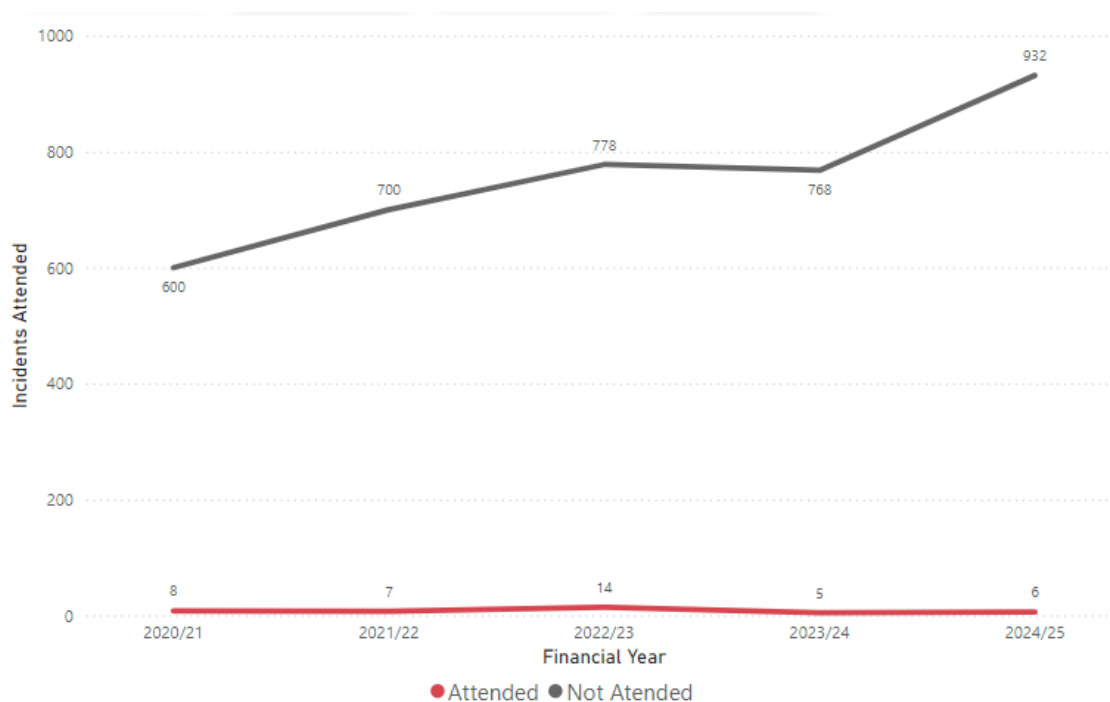


In addition, the total number of AFAs recorded during Q1 has decreased since the last quarter, and the number of False Alarm Good Intent (FAGI) incidents has increased. This was due to a recording error, whereby Control had been recording some FAGI incidents as False Alarm AFAs. This error has since been rectified, and guidance has been provided to Control's Watches by the CMT on the correct practices that need to be adhered to.



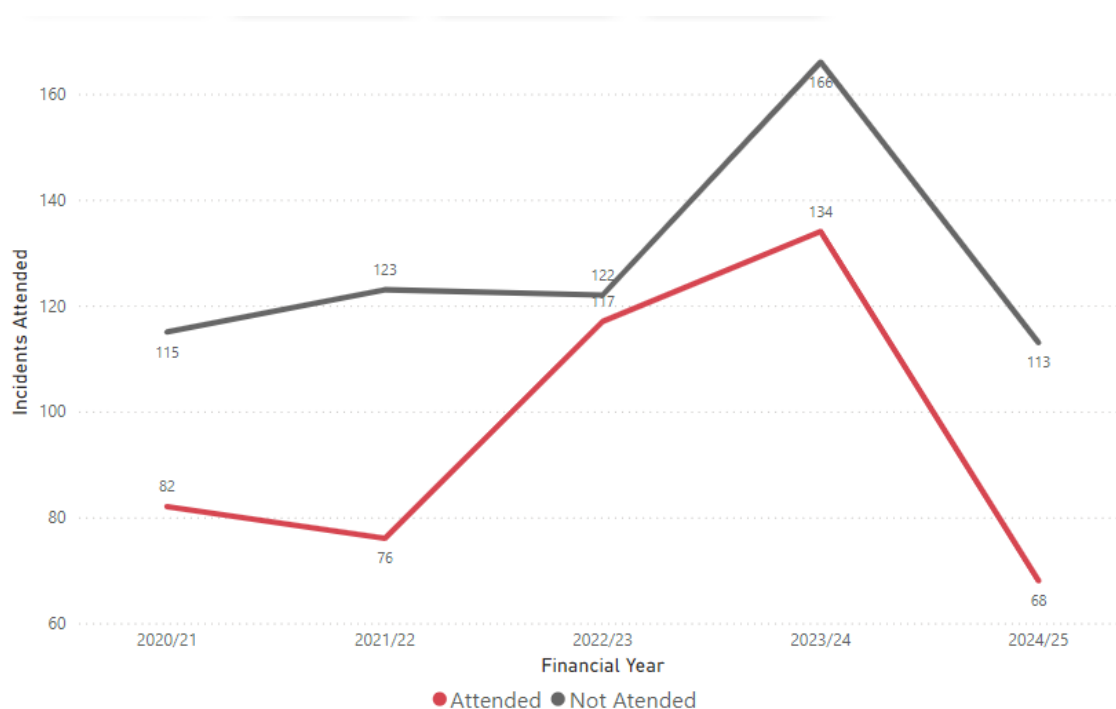
11 Commercial AFA calls

938 Commercial AFA calls were received during the reporting period, which is the highest number of calls received during any Q2 period in the last five years.



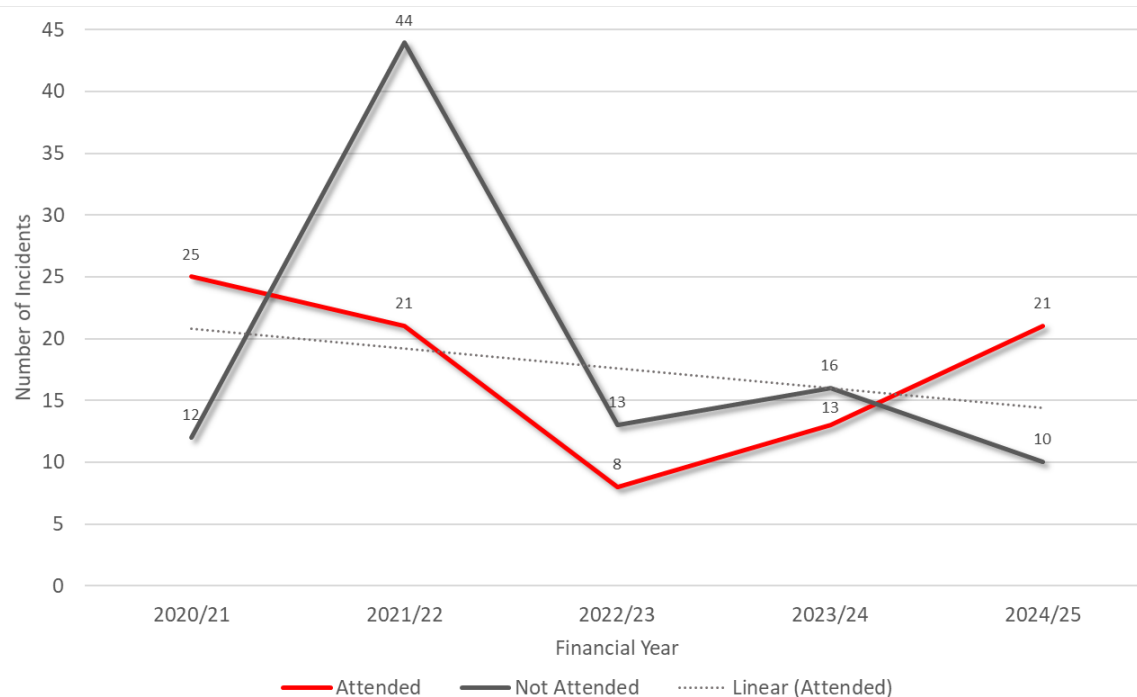
12 Hospital AFA calls

181 Hospital AFA calls were received during Q2 of 2024/25, which is the lowest number of calls received during any Q2 period in the last five years. **68** were attended, 49.3% less than last year (134).



13 HMP Berwyn

21 primary fires were started deliberately at HMP Berwyn. This is 61.5% more than last year.



Actions taken to date:

- The communication procedure between HMP Berwyn and Control room continues to work well, with a number of incidents not being attended or resulting in crews being stood down before attendance.
- NWFRS maintains a working relationship with the HMP Berwyn Management team to continue the reduction in attendances where possible.

Our Response Principle



14 RDS Station Availability

The below table shows the average pump availability for all RDS Stations between 06:00 and 18:00. The availability is broken down by month, showing the respective weekday and weekend/bank holiday availability.

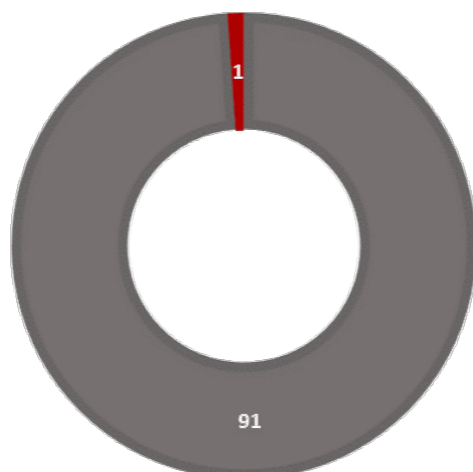
The table is representative of all RDS watches that are not based at wholetime or day crewed stations.

Average of RDS Stations Availability 06:00-18:00				
Day/Month	July	August	September	Q2
Weekday	5	4	4	4
Weekend (incl. Bank Holiday)	11	11	10	11
Overall Average	6	7	6	6

N.B. Availabilities have been rounded down to the nearest whole number.

15 Planned 18 Pump Availability

■ 100% Pump Availability Met ■ 100% Pump Availability Not Met



Number of Days Planned Availability Achieved	
100% Pump Availability Met	
Weekday	64
Weekend/Bank Holiday	27
100% Pump Availability Not Met	
Weekday	1

N.B. Control's Availability Manager stated that 18 pump availability was not achieved on the 29th August 2024 for a two-hour portion of the day.

16 Emerging Technologies

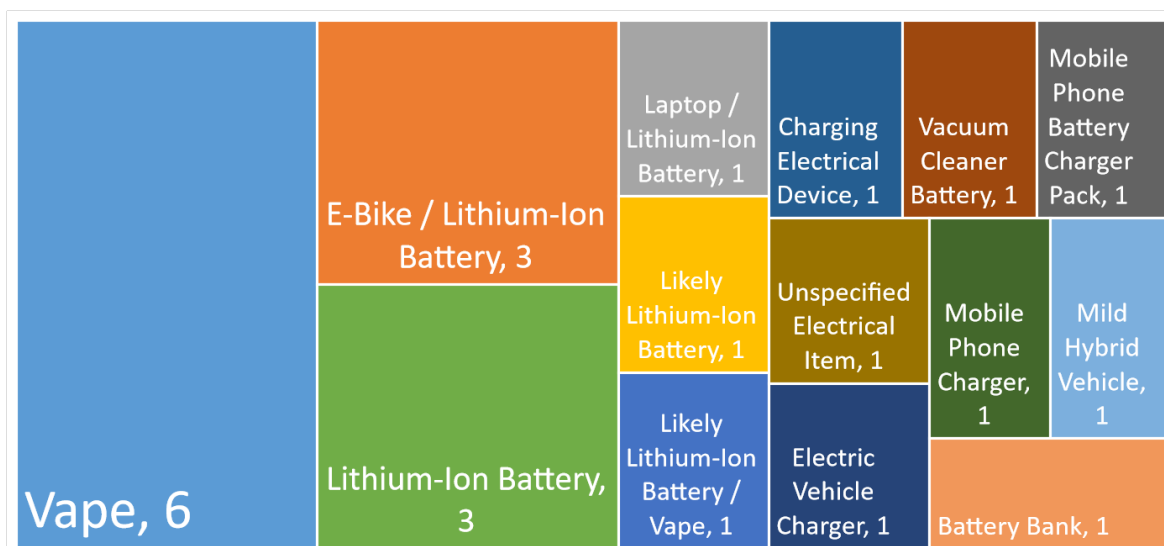
As technology evolves and our societal reliance upon it increases, it has become apparent that new and complex risks are presented to our Fire Service. Emerging technologies can make up a variety of forms, including things like:

- Electric Vehicles
- Wind Farms
- Devices containing Lithium-Ion Batteries

The purpose of this new addition to the Performance Monitoring Report is to highlight what incidents NWFRS attends that relate to these emerging technologies, by indicating the number of incidents by technology type that we attend.

As many of these technologies are not currently captured within the Home Office's Incident Recording System (IRS), key word searches are conducted on incident logs in order to find the relevant incidents. Work is currently being undertaken by the Home Office to integrate these technologies into their recording system, with a view to this being rolled out potentially by Q1 2025.

The below table summarises the incident data that relates to emerging technologies. This data covers the period of April 2024 to September 2024.



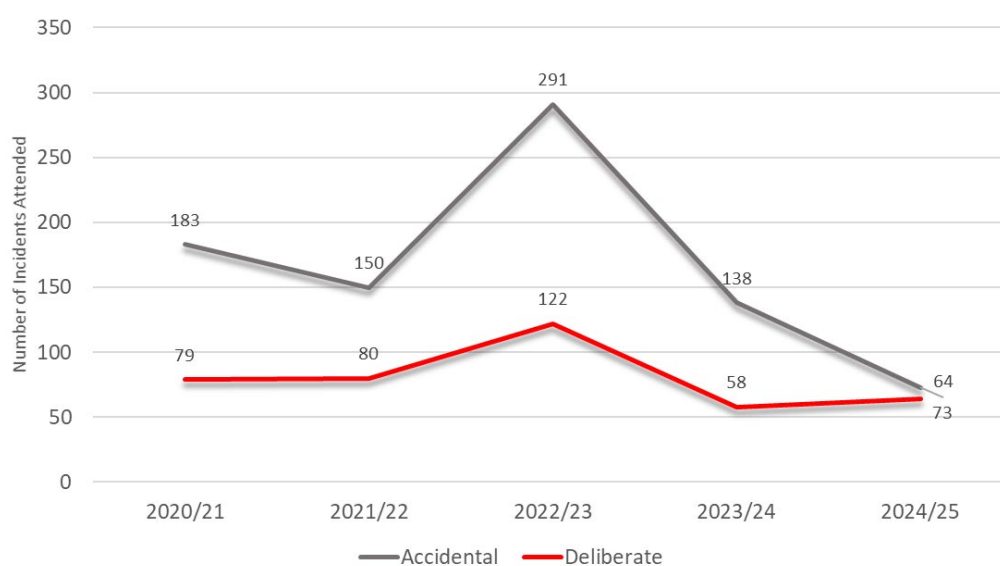
N.B. Some of the above incidents involved the deliberate ignition of goods to start a fire. Furthermore, other incidents involved apparatus being damaged which then subsequently started a fire.

Our Environment Principle



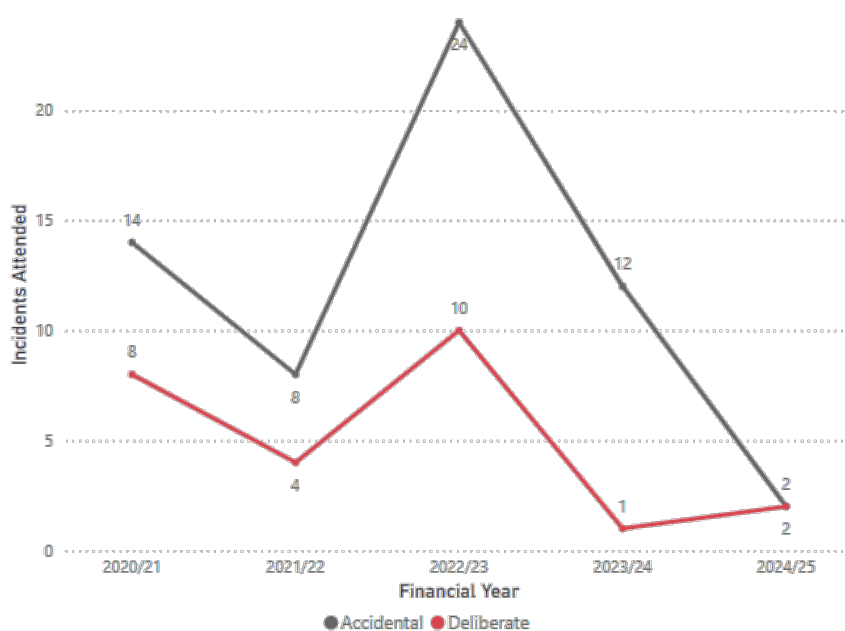
17 Grassland, woodland and crop fires

137 Grassland, woodland and crop fires were recorded during the quarter, a 30.1% decrease from the 196 recorded during the same period last year. This is 51.1% below the three-year average of 280.



18 Wildfires

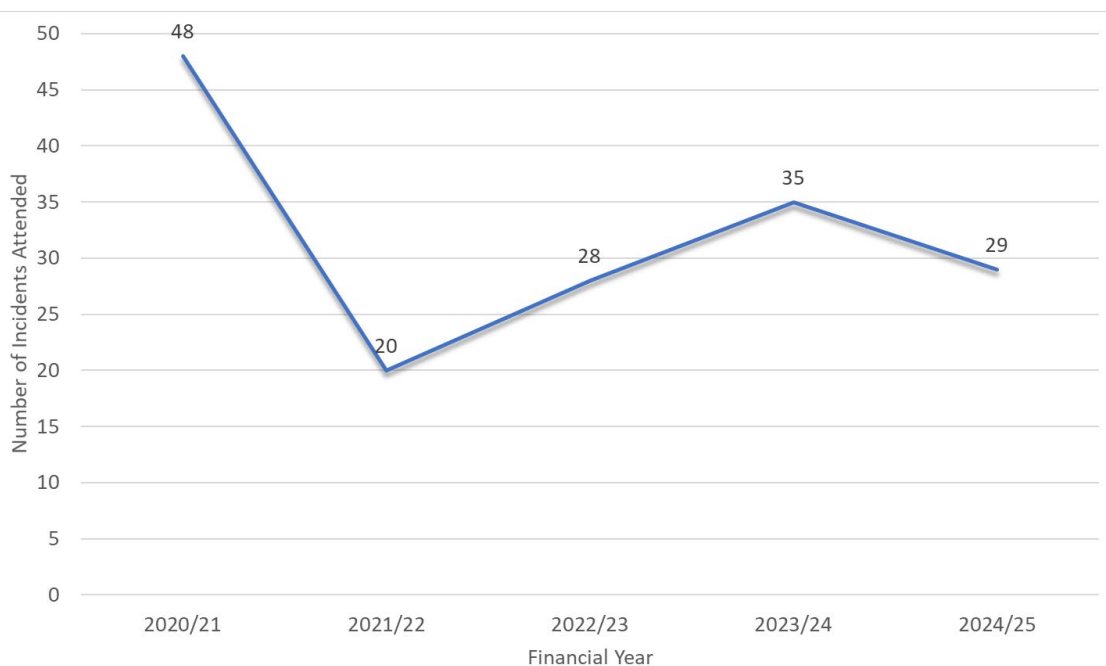
Four wildfires were attended during the period. This is 80.0% below the three-year average of 20. As a result, the time spent monitoring the incident decreased to over 229 hours, compared with almost 477 hours during the same period of the previous year, where 13 wildfires were attended.



19 Flooding

There were **29** flooding incidents attended during the half of 2024/25. This is a 17.1% decrease in incidents attended compared to the same period of the previous year, and is a 3.6% increase over the three-year average (28).


Advice was given at **13** incidents, whilst **eight** incidents were attended to make the scene safe.



Glossary

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

False Alarms - Malicious	These are calls made with the intention of getting the FRS to attend a non-existent incident, including deliberate and suspected malicious intentions.
False Alarms – Good Intent	These are calls made in good faith in the belief that the FRS really would attend a fire or special service incident.
False Alarms - AFA	These are calls initiated by fire alarm and fire-fighting equipment. They include accidental initiation of alarm apparatus or where an alarm operates and a person then routinely calls the FRS as part of a standing arrangement, i.e., with no 'judgement' involved, for example from a security call centre or a nominated person in an organisation.
Building - Dwellings	A property that is a place of residence, i.e., occupied by households, excluding hotels, hostel and residential non-permanent structures.
Building - Non-Residential	Properties such as hospitals, offices, shops, factories, warehouses, restaurants, cinemas, public buildings, religious buildings, agricultural buildings, railway stations, sheds, prisons.
Building - Other Residential	Properties such as hotels, hotels and residential institutions B&Bs, Nursing/care homes, student halls of residence.
Vehicle (Road and Other Transport)	Road vehicle, rail vehicle, aircraft, boat.
Outdoor	Fields, grassland, woodland, refuse containers, post boxes.
Wildfires	A grassland, woodland and crop fire where the incident was attended by 4 or more vehicles, or the Service was in attendance for 6 hours or more, or where there was an estimated fire damage area of over 10,000 square meters.
Short Term Sickness (STS)	Absences 27 calendar days and under.
Long Term Sickness (LTS)	Absences 28 calendar days and over.

Report to	Executive Panel	
Date	16 December 2024	
Lead Officer	Gareth Owens, Clerk and Monitoring Officer	
Contact Officer	Llinos Gutierrez-Jones, Head of Human Resources	
Subject	Triannual benchmarking of the Chief Fire Officer's salary	

PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1 To advise Members of the North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority (the Authority) of the outcome of the triannual benchmarking of the Chief Fire Officer's (CFO) salary.

RECOMMENDATION

- 2 It is recommended that Members:
 - i) Confirm to the Authority that, through the Executive Panel, they have discharged their duty to undertake a triannual benchmarking exercise in line with the "two-track" approach for determining levels of pay for Brigade Managers as prescribed by the National Joint Council; and
 - ii) note the findings of the exercise.

BACKGROUND

- 3 On 25 October 2021 the Authority adopted a single set of pay principles for Principal Management Pay. This provided Members with a consistent method of formulating an independently derived figure that reflected the Authority's aspirations and values.
- 4 These pay principles are:
 - i. pay scales will be linked to the average basic pay rates collated and published by the national joint council for brigade managers of local authority fire and rescue services in order to give appropriate sector-specific comparisons;
 - ii. each seniority level will be employed on a three-point scale with progression up the scale to be subject to satisfactory annual appraisal. Each increment in scale will be based upon £1,500 for the CFO; and a relative proportion for the other posts;

iii. the authority will pay, at the bottom of the three-point scale, the average basic pay for an authority in population band 2, which will be inclusive of all duties;

iv. the nationally negotiated and agreed annual pay awards will be automatically applied, as currently happens in the case of “grey book” and “green book” employees (subject to an employee choosing to forego any part of it);

v. the pay relativities between the roles of CFO, Deputy Chief Fire Officer (DCFO), Assistant Chief Fire Officer (ACFO) and Assistant Chief Fire Officer (ACO) were restored to the proportions within North Wales Fire and Rescue Service (the Service) prior to 2009, and which are custom and practice in most Fire and Rescue Services. The salary of each seniority level will be calculated as a proportion of the CFO’s salary as follows: Deputy Chief Fire Officer 80%; Assistant Chief Fire Officer 75%; Assistant Chief Officer 60%;

vi. posts will be sized appropriately, relative to their seniority level, and will be of equal size across all at that level in order to ensure that officers receive equal pay for work of equal value; and

vii. pay will be reviewed at regular intervals in line with the requirements under the ‘two-track’ approach for determining levels of pay for Brigade Managers, as prescribed by the National Joint Council. Three years is the accepted interval.

INFORMATION

- 5 The seven pay principles enable the Authority to set senior pay based on comparable rates paid to the Chief Fire Officers of Population Band 2 areas. This removes an element of subjectivity and helps to ensure that the Authority remains competitive when seeking to attract and retain senior leaders from within the Service or elsewhere.
- 6 The Clerk, CFO and Treasurer have reviewed the current CFO’s salary against benchmarking figures produced by the Local Government Association as the employer’s side in the National Joint Council for Brigade Managers of Local Authority Fire and Rescue Services. The report for 2021 & 2022 gives the most recent benchmark and is based on examining levels of pay of all UK fire authorities. The benchmark figure is £138,623.
- 7 Applying the annual increase that has been agreed nationally (4% 3.5% and 3%) to the figures collected as at 31 March 2022, before the 2021 increase had been agreed, produces a benchmark figure of £153,690. This shows that the Authority’s rates of pay are still consistent with principles i and ii and that they remain competitive.

IMPLICATIONS

Well-being Objectives	N/A
Budget	The funding for this role is within the existing budget
Legal	The Authority discharges its duties to benchmark the CFO's salary every three years
Staffing	The salary can now be demonstrated to be competitive
Equalities/Human Rights/ Welsh Language	The salary for this post does not discriminate against any person with the protective characteristics, providing they meet the essential criteria for the role.
Risks	None

APPENDIX ONE

LGA Pay survey – published 2023

The average basic pay of chief fire officers in all fire and rescue authorities at 31st March 2022 was £149,056, an increase of 0.1 per cent since 2021. Among deputy chief fire officers, average basic pay fell by 1.3 per cent to £122,452. The average basic pay of assistant chief fire officers fell by 0.7 per cent to £109,865. A breakdown by population band is shown in Table 3.

	Chief fire officer	Chief fire officer	Deputy chief fire officer	Deputy chief fire officer	Assistant chief fire officer	Assistant chief fire officer
Population band	2021	2022	2021	2022	2021	2022
1	130,956	131,918	117,023	107,504	92,376	93,170
2	139,618	138,623	111,717	111,117	98,837	101,333
3	152,038	153,181	131,075	131,980	110,716	109,198
4	161,353	162,472	132,658	129,847	116,838	115,420
Total (incl London)	148,986	149,156	124,044	122,452	110,666	109,865

Base: All respondents (48).

Overall average gross total pay of chief fire officers changed negligibly between 2021 and 2022 when it stood at £149,752. For DCFOs, gross pay fell by 0.9 per cent to £124,744 and for ACFOs it fell by 1.4 per cent to £110,076. A full breakdown by population band is shown in Table 4.

Mae'r ddogfen hon ar gael yn Gymraeg

Agenda Item 9

Report to	Executive Panel
Date	16 December 2024
Lead Officer	Stewart Forshaw, Deputy Chief Fire Officer
Contact Officer	Anthony Jones, Head of Planning, Performance and Transformation
Subject	Strategic Risk Management



PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1 To provide Members with;
 - an update on development to the risk management process;
 - an outline of the draft Risk Appetite Statement; and
 - an overview of North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority's (the Authority) Strategic Risk Register.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 2 Since the last update, and following the review of internal controls by internal auditors, Mersey Internal Audit Agency (MIAA), several changes to how risk is recorded and managed are being implemented to strengthen the risk management process.
- 3 A draft Risk Appetite Statement has also been developed which led to a review of the risk themes, of which there are now eight. The Risk Appetite matrix, which supported the development of the draft Risk Appetite Statement, is included at [Appendix 1](#).
- 4 The report provides Members with an update of the content of the Authority's Strategic Risk Register.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- 5 It is recommended that Members:
 - i) note the development of the risk management process;
 - ii) approve the draft Risk Appetite Statement; and
 - iii) note the Strategic Risk Register.

BACKGROUND

- 6 The Authority's Strategic Risk Register identifies known risks that could potentially prevent the Authority from achieving its planned outcomes and/or delivering its core functions. Register entries are assigned risk scores that are regularly re-evaluated by officers to reflect the current state and the predicted effect of planned mitigations.
- 7 Under this policy, the Executive Panel receives a summary report on strategic risks at least twice a year. Between meetings, the Chair and Deputy Chair of the Authority are able to view the full detail of the register with officers.

INFORMATION

Developments to risk management processes

- 8 Since the last update, and following the review of internal controls by internal auditors, MIAA, several changes to how risk is recorded and managed are being implemented.
- 9 Heads of Department are responsible for identifying and managing the risks they own. However, a Strategic Risk Committee has been added to the Governance Assurance Structure. This committee is responsible, amongst other things, for reviewing those risks that are identified as being High or Very High Risk.
- 10 The Strategic Risk Committee is supported in its work by all other Committees in the Governance Assurance Structure, which now all have risk as a standing agenda item for discussion of new and existing risks in the context of their respective workstreams.
- 11 A Risk Appetite Statement has also been developed which led to a review of the risk themes, of which there are now eight. The Risk Appetite matrix, which supported the development of the Risk Appetite Statement is included at [Appendix 1](#).

North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority Risk Appetite Statement (Draft)

Last updated: 12/11/2024 at Strategic Risk Committee

- 12 The Authority recognises that its long-term sustainability depends upon optimising risk in relation to the delivery of its strategic objectives, and also that the relationship with communities, staff, contractors, the general public and other stakeholders is key to the Service's success.

- 13 The Authority does not have a single risk appetite, but rather appetites across the range of its activities. We recognise that in pursuit of our well-being and improvement objectives that we may choose to accept different degrees of risk in different areas.
- 14 Our risk appetite has been defined following consideration of organisational risks, issues and consequences. We will always aim to operate organisational activities at the levels defined below. Where activities are projected to exceed the defined levels, this must be highlighted through appropriate governance mechanisms.
- 15 **Financial risks:** We have adopted a **cautious** stance for financial risks with reference to core running costs, seeking safe delivery options with little residual risk that only yield some upside opportunities. The Authority will receive ongoing assurance through the annual governance statement that policies and procedures are in place in line with CIPFA/SOLACE guidance.
- 16 **Response/Operations risks:** We have adopted a **cautious** stance for risks to our ability to respond to emergencies, seeking to safeguard our ability to reduce risk to the public whilst maximising the safety of our fire fighters.
- 17 **Legal/Regulatory compliance risks:** We have adopted a **minimal** stance for compliance, seeking a preference for adhering to responsibilities, and safe delivery options with little residual risk. The Authority will have annual assurance that compliance regimes are in place, through the Annual Governance Statement.
- 18 **Reputational risks:** We have adopted an **open** stance for reputational risks, with a preference for safer delivery options, tolerating a cautious degree of residual risk and choosing the option most likely to result in successful delivery, thereby enhancing our reputation for delivering high quality, cost-effective services to the public.
- 19 **People risks:** We have adopted a **cautious** stance in relation to People risks. We believe strongly in the importance of positive staff engagement and maintaining a values-led culture in support of all our staff. Recruitment and retention of retained firefighters is a particular challenge in some of our more rural communities.
- 20 **Information risks:** We have adopted a **cautious** stance to the management and storage of personal information risk, to reflect the sensitivity and importance of information held on our systems to support our prevention and protection activities as well as staff information processed for the purposes of employment.

21 **Technology/Cyber risks:** We have adopted a **minimal** stance for threats to our assets arising from external malicious attacks. To address this risk, we operate strong internal control processes and utilise robust technology solutions.

22 **Assets/Estates risks:** We have adopted a **cautious** stance for assets and estates respectively, seeking value for money but with a preference for proven delivery options that have a low residual risk. This means that we use solutions for purchase, rental, disposal, construction, and refurbishment that ensure we protect the taxpayer from as much risk as possible, producing good value for money whilst fully meeting organisational requirements.

23 Strategic Risk Register

Theme	Mitigating Actions
<p>Financial (Risk Appetite – Cautious)</p> <p>Due to unexpected events, including weaknesses in budget management, there is a risk that services are not delivered within the agreed budget.</p> <p>Due to complexity of pension rules and the need to address legal challenges there is a risk that the deadlines may not be met</p>	<p>Financial information available to budget holders in real time, and additional information provided regarding high level, high risk areas.</p> <p>Business case to be completed for all additional and capital expenditure.</p> <p>Members' Budget Scrutiny Working Group to ensure appropriate budget is set.</p> <p>Promotion of adherence to the Contract Procedural Rules and scheme of delegation.</p> <p>Procurement & Contracts Manager supporting departments to identify appropriate procurement routes.</p> <p>Member of scheme Advisory Board.</p> <p>Data quality is improving.</p> <p>Cashflows are outside of the pension fund.</p>

<p>Response/Operations (Risk appetite – Cautious)</p> <p>The recruitment and retention of sufficient staff to maintain service delivery with specific challenges around maintaining emergency response cover in rural areas.</p>	<p>Dedicated recruitment and availability teams in each area.</p> <p>Dedicated groups and Committee in Assurance Structure focusing on this risk.</p> <p>Officers, staff and representative groups working in social partnership to achieve the aims of the Emergency Cover Review.</p> <p>Dedicated daily availability resource maximises appliance availability across North Wales.</p>
<p>Reputational (Risk appetite – Open)</p> <p>Due to the current internal and external focus on culture within North Wales Fire and Rescue Service and the Authority there is a reputational risk to the Service and Authority.</p>	<p>Strategic gap analysis and action plans against all recent Fire and Rescue Service cultural reviews.</p> <p>Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Committee focusing on internal culture.</p> <p>Variety of established staff networks.</p> <p>Crest Advisory review of culture.</p> <p>Biennial Fire Family Survey and Staff Working Group.</p> <p>Establishment of Staff Engagement Forum.</p> <p>Dedicated Health and well-being resources available to staff, including Safecall.</p>

<p>Technology/Cyber (Risk appetite – Minimal)</p> <p>Technology/Cyber - Cyber-attack on information, communication and technology.</p>	<p>Continual monitoring of global threats and review of cyber security defences Cyber Essentials accreditation achieved, a Government backed scheme that protects organisations, against a range of the most common cyber-attacks.</p> <p>Endeavour to attract personnel with the requisite skillset to support compliance with best practice</p> <p>Conduct preventative maintenance and review resilient technologies</p>
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Risk is defined as a combination of the likelihood and consequences of hazardous events.

Likelihood: the chance of something happening. May be described by the probability, frequency or uncertainty of events.



Consequence: The outcome of an event. Specifically, the severity or extent of harm caused by an event.



IMPLICATIONS

Well-being Objectives	Maintaining the register and taking action to manage risk increases the likelihood that the Authority's well-being objectives will be achieved.
Budget	Maintaining the register helps prioritise spending decisions that would reduce risk levels.
Legal	Maintaining the register helps to ensure the Authority's compliance with legislation that define its functions and how it operates.
Staffing	No specific implications identified.
Equalities/Human Rights/ Welsh Language	No specific implications identified.
Risks	Mitigations seek to minimise the likelihood of risk occurring,

APPENDIX 1 -RISK APPETITE MATRIX

Risk Appetite Level ▶ Risk Types ▼	AVERSE Avoidance of risk is a key organisational objective.	MINIMAL Preference for very safe delivery options that have a low degree of inherent risk and only a limited reward potential.	CAUTIOUS Preference for safe delivery options that have a low degree of residual risk and only a limited reward potential.	OPEN Willing to consider all potential delivery options and choose while also providing an acceptable level of reward.	EAGER Eager to be innovative and to choose options offering higher business rewards (despite greater inherent risk).
Financial	We have no appetite for decisions or actions that may result in financial loss.	We are only willing to accept the possibility of very limited financial risk.	We are prepared to accept the possibility of limited financial risk. However, VFM is our primary concern.	We are prepared to accept some financial risk as long as appropriate controls are in place. We have a holistic understanding of VFM with price not the overriding factor.	We will invest for the best possible return and accept the possibility of increased financial risk.
Response/Operations	We have no appetite for decisions that may have an uncertain impact on operational delivery.	We will avoid anything that may impact on our ability to respond effectively unless absolutely essential. We will avoid innovation unless established and proven to be effective in a variety of settings.	Our preference is for risk avoidance. However, if necessary we will take decisions on operational delivery where there is a low degree of inherent risk and the possibility of improved outcomes, and appropriate controls are in place.	We are prepared to accept the possibility of a short-term impact on quality outcomes with potential for longer-term rewards. We support innovation.	We will pursue innovation wherever appropriate. We are willing to take decisions on operational delivery where there may be higher inherent risks but the potential for significant longer-term gains.

<p>Risk Appetite Level </p> <p>Risk Types </p>	<p>AVERSE Avoidance of risk is a key organisational objective.</p>	<p>MINIMAL Preference for very safe delivery options that have a low degree of inherent risk and only a limited reward potential.</p>	<p>CAUTIOUS Preference for safe delivery options that have a low degree of residual risk and only a limited reward potential.</p>	<p>OPEN Willing to consider all potential delivery options and choose while also providing an acceptable level of reward.</p>	<p>EAGER Eager to be innovative and to choose options offering higher business rewards (despite greater inherent risk).</p>
<p>Legal/Regulatory</p>	<p>We have no appetite for decisions that may compromise compliance with statutory, regulatory or policy requirements.</p>	<p>We will avoid any decisions that may result in heightened regulatory challenge unless absolutely essential.</p>	<p>We are prepared to accept the possibility of limited regulatory challenge. We would seek to understand where similar actions had been successful elsewhere before taking any decision.</p>	<p>We are prepared to accept the possibility of some regulatory challenge as long as we can be reasonably confident we would be able to challenge this successfully.</p>	<p>We are willing to take decisions that will likely result in regulatory intervention if we can justify these and where the potential benefits outweigh the risks.</p>
<p>Reputational</p>	<p>We have no appetite for decisions that could lead to additional scrutiny or attention on the organisation.</p>	<p>Our appetite for risk taking is limited to those events where there is no chance of significant repercussions.</p>	<p>We are prepared to accept the possibility of limited reputational risk if appropriate controls are in place to limit any fallout.</p>	<p>We are prepared to accept the possibility of some reputational risk as long as there is the potential for improved outcomes for our stakeholders.</p>	<p>We are willing to take decisions that are likely to bring scrutiny of the organisation. We outwardly promote new ideas and innovations where potential benefits outweigh the risks.</p>

<p>Risk Appetite Level </p> <p>Risk Types </p>	<p>AVERSE Avoidance of risk is a key organisational objective.</p>	<p>MINIMAL Preference for very safe delivery options that have a low degree of inherent risk and only a limited reward potential.</p>	<p>CAUTIOUS Preference for safe delivery options that have a low degree of residual risk and only a limited reward potential.</p>	<p>OPEN Willing to consider all potential delivery options and choose while also providing an acceptable level of reward.</p>	<p>EAGER Eager to be innovative and to choose options offering higher business rewards (despite greater inherent risk).</p>
<p>People</p>	<p>We have no appetite for decisions that could have a negative impact on our workforce development, recruitment and retention. Sustainability is our primary interest.</p>	<p>We will avoid all risks relating to our workforce unless absolutely essential. Innovative approaches to workforce recruitment and retention are not a priority and will only be adopted if established and proven to be effective elsewhere.</p>	<p>We are prepared to take limited risks with regards to our workforce. Where attempting to innovate, we would seek to understand where similar actions had been successful elsewhere before taking any decision.</p>	<p>We are prepared to accept the possibility of some workforce risk, as a direct result from innovation as long as there is the potential for improved recruitment and retention, and developmental opportunities for staff.</p>	<p>We will pursue workforce innovation. We are willing to take risks which may have implications for our workforce but could improve the skills and capabilities of our staff. We recognize that innovation is likely to be disruptive in the short term but with the possibility of long-term gains.</p>
<p>Information</p>	<p>Lock down data & information. Access tightly controlled, high levels of monitoring.</p>	<p>Minimise level of risk due to potential damage from disclosure.</p>	<p>Accept need for operational effectiveness with risk mitigated through careful management limiting distribution.</p>	<p>Accept need for operational effectiveness in distribution and information sharing.</p>	<p>Level of controls minimised with data and information openly shared.</p>

Risk Appetite Level ▶ Risk Types ▼	AVERSE Avoidance of risk is a key organisational objective.	MINIMAL Preference for very safe delivery options that have a low degree of inherent risk and only a limited reward potential.	CAUTIOUS Preference for safe delivery options that have a low degree of residual risk and only a limited reward potential.	OPEN Willing to consider all potential delivery options and choose while also providing an acceptable level of reward.	EAGER Eager to be innovative and to choose options offering higher business rewards (despite greater inherent risk).
Technology/Cyber	General avoidance of systems / technology developments.	Only essential systems / technology developments to protect current operations.	Consideration given to adoption of established/ mature systems and technology improvements. Agile principles are considered	Systems / technology developments considered to enable improved delivery. Agile principles may be followed	New technologies viewed as a key enabler of operational delivery. Agile principles are embraced.
Assets/Estates	Obligation to comply with strict policies for purchase, rental, disposal, construction, and refurbishment that ensures producing good value for money.	Recommendation to follow strict policies for purchase, rental, disposal, construction, and refurbishment that ensures producing good value for money.	Requirement to adopt a range of agreed solutions for purchase, rental, disposal, construction, and refurbishment that ensures producing good value for money.	Consider benefits of agreed solutions for purchase, rental, disposal, construction, and refurbishment that meet organisational requirements.	Application of dynamic solutions for purchase, rental, disposal, construction, and refurbishment that ensures meeting organisational requirements.