



Awdurdod Tân ac Achub  
Canolbarth a Gorllewin Cymru  
Mid and West Wales  
Fire and Rescue Authority

# Annual Governance Statement

For the year ended 31 March 2026



Gwasanaeth Tân ac Achub  
Canolbarth a Gorllewin Cymru  
Mid and West Wales  
Fire and Rescue Service

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This Statement has been prepared in accordance with guidance produced by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) and the Society of Local Authority Chief Executives (SOLACE), the ‘*Delivering Good Governance in Local Government Framework*’ 2016. This Annual Governance Statement explains how the Authority has complied with the framework and its seven core principles of good governance to ensure that resources are directed in accordance with agreed policies and priorities.

## Scope of Responsibility

Mid and West Wales Fire and Rescue Authority (the Authority) is responsible for ensuring that its business is conducted in accordance with the law and proper standards; that public money is safeguarded and appropriately accounted for; and used economically, efficiently, effectively and equitably.

The Authority has a duty under the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2009 to make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the way in which its functions are exercised, having regard to a combination of economy, efficiency, effectiveness and equity. The Well-being of Future-Generations (Wales) Act 2015 places a well-being duty on public bodies to set and publish well-being objectives, designed to maximise their contribution to the seven national well-being goals, with a focus on sustainable development.

The introduction of the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 has also introduced the establishment of a new and reformed legislative framework for local government elections, democracy, governance and performance, including the provision of a multi-location policy for meetings.

In discharging its overall responsibility, Fire Authority Members and Senior Officers are responsible for putting in place appropriate arrangements for the governance of the Fire and Rescue Authority's affairs and the stewardship of the resources at its disposal, which includes arrangements for the management of risk.

Strategic leadership is given by and discharged through the Fire Authority and its various Committees, panels and working groups, which enable Members to decide on issues affecting the running of the Fire Authority, in accordance with the principles of openness and democratic accountability.

The day-to-day management and delivery of the Service's functions is carried out by Fire Service Officers under the overall control and guidance of the Chief Fire Officer, who discharges these functions in accordance with the governance framework and the determinations of the Fire Authority and its Committees. In so doing, the Chief Fire Officer is assisted by the Executive Leadership Team.

## Mid and West Wales Fire and Rescue Authority's Governance Arrangements

The Authority is committed to demonstrating that it has the necessary corporate governance arrangements in place to perform effectively. The Authority provides clear strategic direction, and its Constitution clearly defines the roles of Members and Officers. Internal Audit and the Performance, Audit and Scrutiny Committee are committed to ensuring that governance arrangements are effective and robust. The key roles of the Constitution and those responsible for developing and maintaining the Authority's Code of Corporate Governance Framework are set out below.

<b>Constitution</b>	The purpose of the Constitution is to set out in clear language how the Fire Authority works and how it makes decisions.
<b>Fire Authority</b>	<p>Approves the Constitution (including Standing Orders and Financial Regulations).</p> <p>Approves key policies and budgetary framework.</p> <p>Is the main decision-making body of the Authority.</p> <p>Comprises twenty-five Members (including the Chair).</p>
<b>Performance, Audit and Scrutiny Committee</b>	<p>Provides independent assurance to the Fire Authority on the adequacy and effectiveness of the governance arrangements, risk management framework and internal control environment.</p> <p>Promotes high standards of Member conduct.</p> <p>Makes recommendations to the Fire Authority on the approval of the Annual Statement of Accounts and Annual Governance Statement, and in appropriate circumstances approves the Annual Statement of Accounts.</p>
<b>Resource Management Committee</b>	Responsible for the effective management of the resources of the Fire Authority managing and developing the financial, human and property resources of the Authority together with its procurement, Information and Communication Technology (ICT), human resources and transport functions and its engagement with stakeholders.
<b>Chief Fire Officer and the Executive Leadership Team</b>	<p>The Chief Fire Officer is also the Head of Paid Service, responsible for ensuring that all the Authority's functions are properly coordinated, as well as organising staff and appointing an appropriate and functional leadership team.</p> <p>The Chief Fire Officer and their Executive Leadership Team implement the policy and budgetary framework set by the Fire Authority and provide advice to the Fire Authority on the development of future policy and</p>

	<p>budgetary issues. They also oversee the development and implementation of policy and service delivery.</p>
<p><b>Treasurer / Section 151 Officer</b></p>	<p>Ensures lawful and financially prudent decision-making. Administration of financial affairs. Accountable for developing and maintaining the Fire Authority's governance, risk and control framework. Contributes to the effective corporate management and governance of the Fire Authority.</p>
<p><b>Clerk / Monitoring Officer</b></p>	<p>Reports on contraventions or likely contraventions of any enactment or rule of law. Reports on any maladministration or injustice where the Local Government Ombudsman has carried out an investigation. Maintains and updates the Constitution. Establishes and maintains registers of Member interests and gifts, and hospitality. Advises Members on the interpretation of the Code of Conduct for Members and Co-opted Members. Contributes to the effective corporate management and governance of the Fire Authority.</p>
<p><b>Internal Audit</b></p>	<p>Provides independent assurance and an annual opinion on the adequacy and effectiveness of the Fire Authority's governance, risk management and control framework. Delivers an annual programme of risk-based audit activity, including counter-fraud and investigation activity. Makes recommendations for improvements in the management of risk.</p>
<p><b>Managers</b></p>	<p>Responsible for developing, maintaining, and implementing the Fire Authority's governance, risk and control framework. Contribute to the effective corporate management and governance of the Fire Authority through monthly Directorate meetings, Service Leadership Team meetings and Operational Response Forums.</p>

# **Mid and West Wales Fire and Rescue Authority's Governance Framework**

A Code of Corporate Governance was developed by the Authority in 2010 and revised in 2017 in accordance with the CIPFA / SOLACE Delivering Good Governance in Local Government Framework 2016.

The Code of Corporate Governance comprises the systems, processes, culture and values by which Mid and West Wales Fire and Rescue Service (MAWWFRS) is directed and controlled and also the way it accounts to, engages with and leads the community. It enables the Authority to monitor the achievement of its Strategic Aims and to consider whether the Service has delivered appropriate, effective and efficient services. The system of internal control forms a significant part of the Code of Corporate Governance and is designed to manage risk to a reasonable level. It evaluates the likelihood and impact of identified risks being realised and manages each risk appropriately.

The Authority's Code of Corporate Governance brings together in one document all the governance and accountability arrangements the Service has in place. The Code of Corporate Governance Framework is based on best practice guidance set out in the CIPFA / SOLACE Framework, Delivering Good Governance in Local Government, and is used to review the Authority's governance arrangements on an annual basis.

The Authority has conducted an annual review of the effectiveness of its governance against the CIPFA / SOLACE Delivering Good Governance Framework (2016) during 2025/26. The annual review of the Code of Corporate Governance was informed by managers within the Service who are responsible for the development and maintenance of the governance environment, as well as by comments from internal and external audit and other inspection agencies. The reviewed and revised Code of Corporate Governance to year-end 31 March 2026 was approved by the Performance, Audit and Scrutiny Committee in May 2026.

This Statement sets out how the Authority has complied with the seven core principles and sub-principles of its Code of Corporate Governance Framework during the financial year 2025/26. This statement also meets the requirements of The Accounts and Audit (Wales) Regulations 2014.

## **Mid and West Wales Fire and Rescue Authority Governance Assurances for 2025/26**

The Authority's Code of Corporate Governance sets out the Authority's commitment to the principles of good governance. A copy of the Authority's full Code of Corporate Governance for the year

ending 31 March 2026 can be accessed on the Service's website. The following section provides a brief overview of the governance assurances undertaken by the Authority during 2025/26.

## **Principle A: Behaving with integrity, demonstrating strong commitment to ethical values, and respecting the rule of law.**

During 2025/26, the Authority continued to strengthen its culture of integrity, ethical leadership and lawful decision-making through a range of governance, cultural and organisational developments. The Authority remains committed to ensuring that Members and Officers act in the public interest, uphold ethical standards, and demonstrate behaviours consistent with the Nolan Principles, the Service's Vision and Behaviours, and the requirements of relevant legislation.

### **Embedding a Strong Ethical Culture**

The Authority's Constitution, supported by the Code of Conduct for Members and Officers, remained a central part of its ethical governance framework. The Constitution continued to undergo periodic review during 2025/26 to ensure alignment with new legislation, evolving governance needs and organisational developments. The Code of Conduct is reinforced through a comprehensive Member Induction Programme and ongoing advice provided by the Monitoring Officer, Section 151 Officer and Corporate Communications and Democratic Services teams.

The Service has continued work to embed its Vision and Behaviours, aligned to the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) Leadership Framework and the Core Code of Ethics, across policies, processes and everyday practice. Progress in some areas has been intentionally paced to reflect and be responsive to the wider cultural journey currently underway.

Staff induction has also been strengthened. Digital onboarding is now partially operational, providing consistent and accessible information to new employees regarding expected behaviours, safeguarding responsibilities, and dignity at work.

### **Professional Standards and Cultural Improvement**

A renewed focus on professional standards has been established through the continued development of the Professional Standards Board, which provides oversight of conduct-related matters, ensuring that concerns are handled appropriately and consistently. This has been supported by updated HR policies and procedures, including revisions to the Discipline, Grievance and Sickness Absence Management procedures, and the development of a revised disciplinary toolkit for consultation and rollout.

The Service continued to take forward significant cultural improvement actions following both the external Crest Advisory cultural review and the Chief Fire and Rescue Advisor and Inspector recommendations. The creation of a Culture and Inclusion Board and Working Group, the

introduction of an external Culture Specialist, and the appointment of a People and Culture Team demonstrate tangible progress towards a more inclusive, safe and transparent organisational culture.

The Service's People and Culture Team, established to support the cultural repair phase, made a significant contribution during 2025/26. Working closely with Senseia and colleagues across the Service, the team helped strengthen feedback mechanisms, improve routes for speaking up, support culture workshops, and reinforce expectations around behaviour, professionalism and accountability. Their work also supported progress against the CREST recommendations and improvements to recruitment and promotion processes, contributing to a more transparent and inclusive culture. As the planned repair phase concluded, the People and Culture Team were formally stood down on 31 March 2026. This reflects the progress made and the Service's transition into the rebuild phase, where responsibility for embedding positive behaviours, strengthening leadership and sustaining cultural improvements now sits within existing structures, supported by ongoing external expertise and strengthened governance arrangements.

The Authority also continues to support staff through training such as Active Bystander awareness, enhanced Equality, Diversity and Inclusion learning, and ethical leadership development.

### **Ensuring Consistent, Fair and Transparent Decision Making**

Robust decision-making arrangements remained in place to ensure that decisions are lawful, transparent and aligned with the Authority's ethical commitments. The Scheme of Standing Orders, outlined within the Authority's Constitution, clearly defines the respective roles of Members and Officers and was supported by ongoing legal and financial review of all reports before publication. Pre-meetings for all Authority and Committee meetings enabled Members to receive appropriate advice in advance of decision-making.

The new Internal Governance and Decision-Making Process, implemented in April 2024, continued to operate during its trial period. Although a scheduled evaluation was deferred to align with organisational design work undertaken through the "Blueprint for Change" programme, the Service continues to monitor the framework to ensure openness, accountability and clarity of decision pathways.

Minutes of all Authority and Committee meetings, including declarations of interest, continued to be published promptly on the Service website, enhancing transparency and supporting public trust.

### **Upholding Strong Ethical and Anti-Fraud Arrangements**

The Authority maintained its commitment to preventing fraud, corruption and inappropriate conduct. The Anti-Fraud and Anti-Corruption Policy and Corporate Criminal Offence Policy remain active and

require no further action until the next scheduled review in 2027. Registers of interests, gifts and hospitality for both Members and Officers were maintained and regularly monitored by the Monitoring Officer.

The Protected Disclosure Procedure (formerly Whistleblowing) continued to provide a safe mechanism for staff and stakeholders to raise concerns, and the Authority ensured that the procedure remained accessible internally and externally.

Complaints, compliments and comments were monitored through updated procedures, with an interim revised Compliments, Complaints and Comments Procedure published during the year. Further structural review will continue as part of broader organisational changes.

### **Respecting the Rule of Law**

Legal and regulatory compliance remained a core aspect of the Authority's governance approach. The Monitoring Officer and Section 151 Officer ensured that all decision-making adhered to relevant statutory requirements and that governance processes complied with applicable legislation, including the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015, Local Government (Wales) Measure 2009, Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021, the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004, and new obligations arising from national procurement and partnership legislation.

All statutory officer roles were discharged in accordance with the CIPFA Statement on the Role of the Chief Financial Officer in Local Government. Following the retirement of the permanent Section 151 Officer in September 2025, interim arrangements ensured continuity of statutory compliance and financial governance.

Internal and external audit arrangements continued to provide independent assurance of the Authority's governance, risk and control environment. Audit recommendations were monitored through the Business Risk Management Group to ensure timely action and accountability.

### **Principle B: Ensuring openness and comprehensive stakeholder engagement**

During 2025/26, the Authority continued to strengthen its commitment to openness, transparency and meaningful engagement with stakeholders. The organisation recognises that effective communication and inclusive engagement are essential to building trust, supporting informed decision-making, and ensuring that the needs and expectations of the communities it serves are understood and acted upon.

## **Promoting Openness and Accessible Information**

The Authority maintained a clear commitment to openness through the publication of statutory reports, policies and governance documentation on its website, ensuring transparency across all areas of its work. All Authority and Committee meetings continued to be audio-recorded and published online in accordance with the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021, supporting public accountability and enabling communities to access and scrutinise decision-making processes effectively.

The Service also continued to review and update its Freedom of Information procedures annually, ensuring compliance with statutory obligations and the proactive release of information where appropriate.

A redesigned and modernised Service website, launched earlier in 2024, continued to provide an accessible gateway for governance documents, meeting papers, performance reports, and engagement materials, supporting ongoing transparency and ease of access for the public.

## **Strengthening Engagement with Communities and Stakeholders**

The Service continued to deliver comprehensive engagement activity aligned to the Community Risk Management Plan 2040, ensuring that community voices influence service design, risk planning and strategic priorities. Engagement activity undertaken during the year was underpinned by the Communication, Marketing and Engagement Strategy (2024–2027), which guides the Service’s approach to clear, honest, timely and inclusive communication.

The Service undertook structured stakeholder engagement through public consultations, drop-in sessions, digital surveys, and discussions with elected representatives and key partners, ensuring feedback was collected from a broad cross-section of the community. This included ongoing refinement of the “Have Your Say” and wider community engagement surveys, which were combined in 2025 to streamline feedback collection and improve response rates.

## **Embedding Consultation and Evidence into Decision-Making**

Engagement and consultation continued to play a critical role in shaping strategic plans. The Community Risk Management Plan 2040 includes a comprehensive Improvement Planning Framework designed to ensure that the Service consults meaningfully with the public, staff and partner organisations when identifying risks, designing interventions and assessing outcomes. During 2025/26, further work commenced to refine the sections of the Framework relating to corporate projects and evaluation, enhancing the consistency and transparency of future assessments.

Feedback gathered through the Community Risk Management Plan 2040 engagement activities, community surveys and statutory consultations continued to be incorporated into annual reviews and strategic assessments, ensuring that public expectations and community needs remain central to strategic planning.

The Service made increased use of its Balanced Rooms capability to strengthen engagement and shared understanding around flooding and wildfire risk. Balanced Rooms provided a structured environment to bring together operational staff, partner agencies and community representatives to explore risk scenarios, assess potential impacts and support informed discussion around prevention, preparedness and response. These sessions enabled the Service to visually present local risk information, climate-related hazards and mitigation options, helping communities and stakeholders to better understand evolving threats and the role of collective resilience.

The use of Balanced Rooms supported more meaningful two-way engagement, particularly in areas vulnerable to flooding and rural or semi-rural communities at increased risk of wildfire. Feedback gathered through these sessions informed risk assessment processes, community safety activity and partnership working, contributing to a more integrated, place-based approach to managing foreseeable risks.

### **Partnership Working and Engagement**

The Authority continued to play an active role as a statutory partner in Public Services Boards, contributing to joint well-being assessments and well-being plans, and supporting collaborative work across the six local authority areas it serves. The Service's contributions to Public Services Boards continued to ensure clear alignment between multi-agency priorities and the Authority's own long-term objectives under the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015.

Engagement with key stakeholders and the public continued to be strengthened through the Service's Communication, Marketing and Engagement Strategy, which provided a clear framework for how the organisation works with partners, representative bodies, and community groups to support transparency and shared understanding of common risks and priorities.

### **Ensuring Inclusive and Balanced Engagement**

The Authority continued to ensure that engagement activity reaches a diverse range of groups, recognising the importance of engaging both those who actively participate and those who may be less likely to engage. Processes for balancing competing interests remain embedded through the Community Risk Management Plan 2040 consultation framework, ensuring that decisions reflect the needs of communities today while considering the long-term interests of future generations.

The Service also continued to publish annual reports on Compliments, Complaints and Freedom of Information requests, demonstrating transparency in how community feedback has been considered and responded to.

### **Supporting Strong Internal Understanding of Engagement Responsibilities**

Throughout 2025/26, internal communications mechanisms ensured that Members and Officers understood their roles within the wider engagement framework. Regular structured discussions, supported by clear governance processes and forward work programmes, helped ensure that communication responsibilities were well understood and that materials presented to Members were timely and accessible.

Ongoing implementation of the Communication, Marketing and Engagement Strategy ensured continual improvement in engagement practice and supported the Service's commitment to building trust, listening to communities, and improving transparency across all service areas.

### **Principle C: Defining outcomes in terms of sustainable, economic, social, and environmental benefits.**

During 2025/26, the Authority continued to strengthen its strategic planning arrangements to ensure that outcomes are clearly defined, sustainable, and aligned with its long-term responsibilities to communities across mid and west Wales. The Authority's approach is underpinned by the Community Risk Management Plan 2040, the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015, and a comprehensive suite of supporting strategies that ensure decisions are informed, balanced and evidence-based.

### **Clear Strategic Vision and Long-Term Planning**

The Community Risk Management Plan 2040 remained the Authority's primary strategic framework during the year, articulating a clear vision for delivering safe, sustainable and resilient services up to 2040. The Community Risk Management Plan 2040 was developed in alignment with the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015, ensuring that the Authority considers long-term impacts, the sustainable development principle, and the Act's seven well-being goals when planning and delivering its services.

All departmental, divisional and corporate plans continued to align with the Community Risk Management Plan 2040 Improvement and Well-being Objectives, ensuring a consistent line of sight between strategic intent and operational delivery. Regular reviews of the Community Risk Management Plan 2040 performance framework, including further refinement of corporate project and evaluation approaches, supported ongoing continuous improvement.

The Authority also continued to contribute to the well-being objectives of the six Public Services Boards within its region, reinforcing the alignment between local outcomes and wider multi-agency priorities.

### **Sustainable and Evidence-Based Decision Making**

The Authority's decision-making arrangements ensured that all strategic and operational choices considered their economic, social and environmental implications. Reports to the Fire Authority and its Committees incorporated financial, legal and well-being assessments, ensuring that Members had access to clear evidence and advice when determining the best course of action.

The Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS), Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTFP), 5-year Capital Programme and Capital Strategy provided the financial framework to ensure decisions remained affordable, prudent and sustainable. Quarterly budget monitoring reports were presented throughout the year to ensure resources continued to support intended outcomes.

### **Balancing Economic, Social and Environmental Benefits**

The Authority's decision-making arrangements ensured that all strategic and operational choices considered their economic, social and environmental implications. Reports to the Fire Authority and its Committees incorporated financial, legal and well-being assessments, ensuring that Members had access to clear evidence and professional advice when determining the best course of action.

The Community Risk Management Plan 2040 provided the strategic framework for decision making, reinforcing the importance of robust data, risk intelligence and evidence-led analysis in shaping priorities, resource allocation and service delivery. The Community Risk Management Plan 2040 draws on a wide range of operational data, community risk profiles, demographic information and partner intelligence to ensure that decision-making at a strategic level remains informed, transparent and focused on outcomes. This approach supports the Authority in ensuring that services remain fit for purpose, proportionate to risk and tailored to the evolving needs of local communities.

The Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS), Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTFP), 5-year Capital Programme and Capital Strategy provided the financial framework to ensure decisions remained affordable, prudent and sustainable. Quarterly budget monitoring reports were presented throughout the year to provide assurance that resources continued to be deployed in a way that supports strategic priorities, risk reduction and the delivery of outcomes identified through the Community Risk Management Plan 2040.

## **Monitoring Performance and Managing Risks**

Performance and Improvement Progress Reports, along with thematic reports such as the Strategic Equality Plan Progress Report, Health and Safety Reports, and the Annual Sustainability and Environmental Report, were presented regularly to the Performance, Audit and Scrutiny Committee and Resource Management Committee. These reports provided updates on progress against strategic objectives, trends in key performance indicators, and areas requiring further action.

Robust risk management arrangements remained in place through the Business Risk Management Group, which monitored the Business Risk Register and its strategic, operational and financial risks. Updates were provided quarterly to Members, ensuring oversight and accountability.

## **Engagement and Involvement to Shape Outcomes**

The Authority ensured that stakeholder feedback continued to inform its understanding of community needs and expectations. Engagement activity aligned to the Community Risk Management Plan 2040, supported by the Communication, Marketing and Engagement Strategy, enabled communities, staff and partners to contribute to planning processes. This included updated surveys, drop-in events, and the use of structured feedback mechanisms.

Community voices continued to shape the Authority's well-being objectives, improvement planning, and long-term priorities, ensuring that outcomes remain meaningful, balanced and reflective of diverse local needs.

## **Principle D: Determining the interventions necessary to optimise the achievement of the intended outcomes.**

During 2025/26, the Authority continued to strengthen its approach to determining appropriate interventions, ensuring that decisions are informed by robust analysis, meaningful consultation, sound financial planning, and a clear understanding of risks and opportunities. The Authority's governance arrangements enabled Members and Officers to identify, evaluate and select interventions that achieve intended outcomes efficiently and effectively.

## **Objective and Evidence-Based Decision Making**

The Authority maintained strong arrangements to ensure decision makers receive timely, rigorous and objective analysis of available options. Reports submitted to Members included legal, financial and strategic advice, as well as assessments of risks and impacts, all reviewed by the Clerk/Monitoring Officer and Section 151 Officer before publication. This process ensured that Members were able to make informed and transparent decisions based on clear evidence.

The Scheme of Standing Orders continued to set out clear protocols for communication between Members and Officers, clarifying responsibilities and ensuring that information needs are understood and met throughout the decision-making process.

Members and Officers also engaged in regular discussions about information requirements to ensure that analysis supporting decisions remained comprehensive, relevant and up to date.

### **Robust Planning, Governance and Scrutiny Processes**

The Internal Decision Making and Fire Authority Report Template remained a core tool for ensuring consistency and quality in evidence presentation. This supported Members in understanding the consequences of different intervention options, including financial implications, risk levels and expected outcomes.

The Authority's governance and decision-making framework, modernised in 2024, continued to operate during its 12-month implementation period. The planned evaluation was postponed, aligning with the wider organisational redesign work conducted under the "Blueprint for Change" programme; however, assurance processes remained active, ensuring the framework continued to support openness, accountability and good governance.

The Performance, Audit and Scrutiny Committee continued to play a central scrutiny role, reviewing performance data, risk information and progress against strategic plans, thereby supporting robust challenge and continuous improvement.

### **Financial Planning and Budgeting**

The work of the Service, as well as its improvement ambitions as set out within its Community Risk Management Plan 2040, were supported and shaped by the Authority's financial planning framework, including the Medium-Term Financial Strategy, the Medium-Term Financial Plan, the 5-year Capital Programme and the Capital Strategy. These ensured that financial decisions remained sustainable and aligned with organisational priorities. Quarterly financial monitoring, supported by regular internal budget reporting, ensured that resources were appropriately allocated to support the successful delivery of intended outcomes.

Corporate Budget Planning meetings continued throughout 2025/26, involving Members, the Executive Leadership Team and Representative Bodies. These discussions informed intervention planning and ensured that financial decisions reflected both organisational priorities and the funding constraints faced by Constituent Authorities.

### **Stakeholder Consultation in Determining Appropriate Interventions**

Stakeholder engagement remained integral to determining interventions, particularly through work associated with the Community Risk Management Plan 2040. Extensive consultation, including

community surveys, drop-in sessions, Public Services Boards engagement, balanced rooms, and formal partnership working, provided insight into community needs and expectations, helping shape evidence-based interventions aligned with long-term wellbeing priorities.

Consultation feedback was reviewed regularly and incorporated into annual Community Risk Management Plan 2040 updates, well-being assessments and the Service's Improvement Planning Framework, ensuring that interventions were both purposeful and responsive.

### **Managing Competing Priorities and Allocating Resources Effectively**

The Authority continued to balance competing demands through structured analysis of service needs, financial pressures, operational risks and community expectations. The Business Risk Management Group monitored risk assessments and performance trends, providing assurance that proposed interventions aligned with strategic aims and complied with risk control measures.

Performance Monitoring Groups established under the Community Risk Management Plan 2040 continued to track progress against each objective and its associated actions, allowing early identification of barriers or required adjustments to interventions.

### **Evaluation of Interventions and Continuous Improvement**

The Authority maintained a strong cycle of monitoring, review and evaluation. Progress against the Community Risk Management Plan 2040 Improvement and Well-being Objectives was reported through quarterly and six-monthly updates to the Performance, Audit and Scrutiny Committee and the Resource Management Committee, enabling scrutiny of outcomes and the effectiveness of interventions.

An Annual Performance Assessment provided a comprehensive overview of our performance during 2024/25 and was subject to external audit, offering an additional layer of assurance on the effectiveness of intervention planning and delivery.

## **Principle E: Developing the entity's capacity, including the capability of its leadership and the individuals within it.**

During 2025/26, the Authority continued to strengthen organisational capacity, workforce capability and leadership effectiveness to ensure that it remains able to deliver its statutory duties, respond to emerging risks, and achieve its long-term strategic objectives. The Authority recognises that the quality of its people, leadership and organisational systems is central to its ability to operate efficiently, effectively and sustainably.

## **Building and Sustaining Workforce Capacity**

The Authority maintained robust strategic workforce planning arrangements, enabling the Service to anticipate staffing requirements, support succession planning and ensure that it can deploy the right people with the right skills at the right time. Throughout 2025/26, the Strategic Workforce Group continued to meet regularly, overseeing workforce analysis and the development of a new Workforce Planning Strategy, which will be designed to further formalise and strengthen the Service's long-term planning for future capacity.

A full review of Green Book job evaluation processes, completed during 2023/24, continued to support fair and consistent role allocation across the Service, with appropriate role evaluations undertaken throughout 2025/26.

The Service also continued to invest in the physical capability of its operational workforce. Biennial firefighter fitness assessments, risk-critical training plans, and the provision of fitness equipment at all stations remained integral to ensuring that operational personnel are safe, competent and fit for duty.

## **Strengthening Leadership and Management Capability**

Leadership capability continued to be enhanced through structured development programmes aligned to the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) Leadership Framework. During 2025/26, the Authority also managed a significant period of leadership transition.

Following the retirement of the Chief Fire Officer in October 2025, a structured national recruitment process was undertaken, supported by external executive search expertise, resulting in the appointment of a new Chief Fire Officer in December 2025. Interim arrangements ensured continuity of statutory responsibilities and organisational leadership during this transition period.

Alongside this, the Authority undertook a review of its Executive Leadership Team structure, informed by organisational learning, cultural improvement activity and national developments across the fire and rescue sector. This resulted in a move towards a more streamlined and agile leadership model, including the decision not to replace the Deputy Chief Fire Officer role and the creation of additional Assistant Chief Fire Officer capacity. The introduction of a new Director-level role for People and Culture further strengthened the strategic leadership of the workforce, culture and organisational development. These changes are designed to provide clearer accountability, support cultural transformation, and ensure the Service is well positioned to deliver its strategic priorities.

Staff Appraisals, implemented in 2023, were further reviewed during 2025/26, resulting in recommendations to improve usability, embed the Service's Behaviours more explicitly, and explore

alternative software solutions. This ensured that leadership expectations, behaviours and development needs are consistently reinforced through ongoing performance management.

### **Improving Organisational Capacity and Governance Structures**

The Authority continued to refine its internal governance arrangements to enhance organisational capacity and ensure effective decision-making. Executive Leadership Team and Service Leadership Team meetings were held regularly to support strategic oversight, operational coordination and organisational resilience.

The Strategic Asset and Capital Management Group met quarterly, ensuring strong oversight of the Capital Programme, asset planning and long-term resource sustainability. Quarterly Revenue Budget and Capital Monitoring Reports were presented to the Resource Management Committee throughout 2025/26, ensuring that financial resources remained aligned to organisational capacity needs.

The Authority also ensured that Members were equipped with appropriate ICT tools to support remote and hybrid working. In 2025/26, all Members were issued with tablet devices to enhance secure access to Service systems, supporting both the green agenda and the Service's Cyber Security Strategy.

### **Developing a Skilled, Supported and Safe Workforce**

The Service continued to invest in staff development, training and support. A coaching and mentoring programme, linked to the Appraisal process, remained available to support personal development and leadership readiness. Management seminars and training programmes continued to incorporate ethical behaviour, leadership expectations and professional standards.

Human Resources policies and procedures were reviewed regularly throughout 2025/26 to ensure they remained current, effective and aligned to legal requirements. These policies support staff well-being, performance, conduct and development across the organisation.

Organisational well-being remained a priority. The Service continued to maintain the Corporate Health Award requirements and ensured access to well-being support arrangements for all staff. The publication of an updated Well-being Strategy and associated Be Well Programme further emphasises the commitment to staff wellbeing. Regular reporting on health, safety, welfare, sickness absence and workforce wellbeing ensured that the Authority maintained clear oversight of workforce health indicators.

## **Ensuring Clear Roles, Responsibilities and Effective Leadership Structures**

Roles and responsibilities for Statutory Officers, Members and Officers are set out clearly in the Authority's Constitution. Job descriptions for all posts continued to be reviewed by employees and managers to ensure they remain relevant and reflective of organisational needs.

Member attendance at Authority and Committee meetings was reviewed through the Democratic Services Forum, ensuring that governance responsibilities were being appropriately discharged.

## **Supporting Organisational Learning and Continuous Improvement**

The Authority maintained a strong commitment to organisational learning. Lessons learned from internal and external reviews, including internal audit reports, external audit findings and sector-wide cultural reviews, were incorporated into leadership discussions, workforce development planning and organisational improvement actions.

The Service also played an active role in all-Wales workforce initiatives through the all-Wales People and Organisational Development Strategy, helping to shape consistent national approaches to workforce development.

## **Principle F: Managing risks and performance through robust internal control and strong public financial management.**

During 2025/26, the Authority continued to strengthen its risk management, internal control and financial governance arrangements to ensure that performance is effectively monitored, resources are used responsibly, and public funds are safeguarded. These arrangements are essential to providing assurance that the Authority is delivering its statutory functions efficiently, transparently and in the public interest.

### **Embedding a Comprehensive Risk Management Framework**

Risk management remained embedded across all levels of the organisation. The Corporate Risk Department maintained the Service's Risk Management Policy, outlining clear roles and responsibilities for Members and Officers. This policy was operationalised through the Business Risk Management Group, which met quarterly and included representation from every Directorate and the Fire Authority.

The Group ensured that the Business Risk Register remained current, accurately reflecting strategic, operational and financial risks. It also monitored progress in relation to the Code of Corporate Governance and internal and external audit recommendations. Updated risk reports were presented quarterly to the Performance, Audit and Scrutiny Committee, enabling Members to scrutinise key risks and the effectiveness of mitigation measures.

The Authority continued to apply the risk rating methodology set out in HM Treasury's *Orange Book – Management of Risk – Principles and Concepts (2023)*, ensuring that risk assessment remained aligned to recognised best practice. For every risk, a clear audit trail was maintained, demonstrating the rationale for its inclusion and the actions taken to control or mitigate it.

Monthly and ad-hoc communications ensured that personnel remained informed of risk issues, with ongoing risk management training delivered by the Corporate Risk Department.

### **Robust Internal Control and Assurance Arrangements**

The Authority maintained strong internal control arrangements through clear governance structures, the Constitution, Standing Orders, Financial Procedure Rules and a comprehensive internal audit programme. Financial Procedure Rules and Contract Standing Orders were reviewed, updated and approved by Members during 2025/26, maintaining their alignment with legislation and best practice.

Internal Audit, delivered by Carmarthenshire County Council, provided independent assurance on governance, risk management and internal controls. The Internal Audit Plan for 2025/26 was approved by the Performance, Audit and Scrutiny Committee, and Members received regular progress updates throughout the year. Final audit reports were presented with clear assurance ratings and recommendations, all of which were monitored through departmental action plans and the Business Risk Management Group.

External Audit, provided by Audit Wales, also continued to supply independent assurance regarding financial statements, proper arrangements and continuous improvement duties. Audit Wales issued an unqualified opinion on the Authority's financial statements for 2024/25 and presented the required audit reports and certificates of compliance to Members during the year.

### **Performance Management and Oversight**

Performance management remained a central part of internal control. Quarterly and six-monthly performance reports were presented to the Performance, Audit and Scrutiny Committee and the Resource Management Committee during 2025/26, providing oversight of key performance indicators, progress against the Community Risk Management Plan 2040 Improvement and Well-being Objectives, and updates on strategic projects.

Performance Monitoring Groups, established for each Community Risk Management Plan 2040 Objective, continued to meet quarterly to assess delivery progress, identify emerging risks and ensure consistent oversight. The "Chairs Groups" and the Community Risk Management Delivery Board, chaired by the Chief Fire Officer, provided additional strategic scrutiny.

An Annual Performance Assessment provided a comprehensive overview of performance at year's-end and was published for external audit by Audit Wales, ensuring transparency and accountability in reporting.

### **Ensuring Strong Public Financial Management**

Financial management remained strong and well-governed throughout 2025/26. The Authority operated within a structured financial planning framework supported by the Medium Term Financial Strategy, Medium Term Financial Plan, Treasury Management Strategy and the 5-year Capital Programme.

A robust budget-setting process engaged Officers, Members and Representative Bodies, ensuring that financial decisions were evidence-based and aligned with service needs, risk assessments and Community Risk Management Plan 2040 priorities. Value-for-Money exercises, launched in May 2024, informed the 2025/26 budget and supported organisational efficiency improvements.

Quarterly Revenue and Capital Monitoring Reports were presented to the Resource Management Committee, and monthly internal budget monitoring supported informed financial control. Treasury Management training was provided to both Members and staff involved in treasury operations.

The Authority complied with statutory financial reporting requirements, with the audited Annual Statement of Accounts for 2024/25 being presented to the Performance Audit and Scrutiny Committee in July 2025 before being approved by the full Authority in September 2025, accompanied by an unqualified audit opinion.

### **Counter-Fraud and Anti-Corruption Measures**

The Anti-Fraud and Anti-Corruption Policy and the Corporate Criminal Offence Policy, reviewed in 2024, remained active and effective during the year. These policies are issued to all new starters and published on the Service's intranet for ready access. The next scheduled review will take place in January 2027.

Internal and external audit processes continued to act as important safeguards against fraud and corruption, with regular reporting to the Performance, Audit and Scrutiny Committee and the Authority ensuring full oversight of actions and recommendations.

### **Principle G: Implementing good practices in transparency, reporting, and audit to deliver effective accountability.**

During 2025/26, the Authority continued to strengthen its arrangements for transparency, public reporting and independent assurance to ensure that decision-making remains open, accountable

and subject to effective scrutiny. These mechanisms help maintain public confidence in the Authority's stewardship of resources, governance processes and performance outcomes.

### **Enhancing Transparency and Public Access to Information**

The Authority remained committed to ensuring that information about its work is easily accessible to the public. All meetings of the full Fire Authority continued to be audio-recorded and published online, in line with the requirements of the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021. This included the publication of agendas, reports, decisions and minutes, ensuring that stakeholders were able to follow and scrutinise governance processes.

The Service's redesigned website, launched in July 2024, supported the Authority's ongoing transparency commitments by providing a modern and accessible platform for publishing statutory documents, performance information, strategic plans and governance reports. This included Annual Performance Assessments, Community Risk Management Plan 2040 documents, environmental reports, equality statements and financial strategies.

Councillor attendance at meetings and Member training participation continued to be monitored and published annually, ensuring openness regarding Member engagement and accountability.

### **Strengthening Reporting and Performance Accountability**

The Authority ensured that reporting arrangements remained robust, timely and aligned with governance and audit expectations. Quarterly and six-monthly reports, including Performance and Improvement Progress Reports, Revenue and Capital Monitoring Reports, the Business Risk Register, and Strategic Equality and Environmental reports, were presented to the Performance, Audit and Scrutiny Committee and the Resource Management Committee throughout 2025/26. These reports provided Members with clear oversight of performance trends, financial stewardship and progress against strategic objectives.

An Annual Governance Statement, aligned to CIPFA/SOLACE principles, was prepared and approved as part of the audited Statement of Accounts, demonstrating a clear commitment to transparent reporting of governance arrangements, assurances and improvement actions.

An Annual Performance Assessment provided a comprehensive overview of performance at year's-end and was published for external audit by Audit Wales, ensuring transparency and accountability in reporting.

### **Promoting Accountability Through Clear Governance Arrangements**

The Authority's Constitution continued to clearly define the roles, responsibilities and powers of Members, Officers and Committees. The Internal Decision-Making and Fire Authority Report

Template ensured that decision papers included full legal, financial and risk considerations, supporting informed and transparent decision making.

Forward work plans supported the timely submission of reports and ensured that statutory and governance deadlines were met. Meeting dates for 2025/26 were approved at the Annual General Meeting in June 2025, ensuring clarity and predictability in reporting cycles.

The Authority also continued to support Members through induction, ongoing development, training sessions and legislative briefings, ensuring they maintained the necessary capability to provide effective democratic oversight.

### **Ensuring Accountability for Partnerships and Collaboration**

As a statutory partner of six Public Services Boards, the Authority ensured clear accountability for its partnership contributions. Documentation relating to Public Services Boards' activity, including Well-being Plans and consultation reports, remained accessible via the Service website, supporting transparency and shared accountability across the wider public sector.

The Authority also continued to provide updates to Welsh Government and other partners regarding progress on cultural improvement, governance reforms and sector-wide initiatives, reinforcing its commitment to open and accountable public service delivery.

# Opinion on the level of assurance that the governance arrangements can provide

## Review of Effectiveness

The Authority has responsibility for conducting, at least annually, a review of the effectiveness of its governance framework, including the system of internal control. The review of effectiveness is informed by the work of the Executive Leadership Team and other Senior Officers within the Authority who have responsibility for the development and maintenance of the governance environment. The work is supported by reports from internal and external auditors, while recommendations from peer assessors are also considered.

The effectiveness of the governance framework draws on evidence and assurances from:

- Fire Authority.
- Executive Leadership Team and appropriate Senior Officers.
- Scheme of Delegation to Officers.
- Resource Management Committee (RMC).
- Performance, Audit and Scrutiny Committee (PASC).
- Standards Committee.
- Internal Audit.
- External Audit.

## Internal Audit

Carmarthenshire County Council Internal Audit Section has provided the Internal Audit function for MAWWFRS since Local Government reorganisation in 1996. A 3-year Internal Audit Plan is agreed with the Section 151 Officer and Director of Resources and approved by the Performance, Audit and Scrutiny Committee. The 3-year plan is reviewed and updated every year to reflect current circumstances and priorities.

In accordance with the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 and the Public Sector Internal Auditing Standards, the Audit Manager is required to provide an opinion on the overall adequacy and effectiveness of the Authority's risk management, control, counter fraud and governance processes.

The Internal Audit Plan for the 2025/26 financial year was agreed with the Director of Resources, the Section 151 Officer and approved by the Performance, Audit and Scrutiny Committee in May 2025. The Performance, Audit and Scrutiny Committee has received progress reports on the delivery of the plan, along with final Internal Audit reports issued throughout 2025/26.

To date, seven final reports and three draft reports have been issued relating to the 2025/26 Audit Plan. In addition, two reviews relating to 2024/25 were finalised during 2025/26. The assurance levels gained are summarised in the following table:

<b>Level of Assurance</b>	<b>Number of 2025/26 Reports</b>
High	4
Reasonable	6
Limited	1
Low	1
Total	12

For the report receiving a “low” assurance there were five recommendations, and many of the agreed actions were addressed during 2025/26. A follow-up audit for this function is planned for 2026/27, to confirm that robust controls have been implemented and are operating effectively.

The Head of Internal Audit, within the MAWWFRS Internal Audit Annual Report 2025/26, which will be reported to the Performance, Audit and Scrutiny Committee in July 2026, provided the following overall opinion:

*‘No system of control can provide absolute assurance against material misstatement or loss, nor can Internal Audit give that assurance. This statement is intended to provide an appropriate level of assurance that there are no major weaknesses in risk management, governance, and control processes’.*

In arriving at the overall opinion, the Head of Internal Audit has considered:

- the results of all work undertaken as part of the 2025/26 Internal Audit Programme.
- the results of work undertaken as part of the 2024/25 Internal Audit Programme, which have been concluded following the issue of last year’s Annual Report.
- the results of follow-up action of Internal Audit Reviews from current and previous years; and
- the acceptance of actions by Management (especially those deemed significant).

*‘It is my opinion that the Authority has a REASONABLE control environment in operation. There are clear Governance arrangements with defined management responsibilities and Committee Structures in place and the control framework is generally sound and operated reasonably consistently. The Authority has an established Constitution, has developed Policies and approved Financial Regulations that provide advice and guidance to all staff and members’.*

*‘Where Internal Audit identified weaknesses or areas of improvement during 2025/26, these were discussed with management and appropriate actions agreed.’*

The recommendations from Internal Audit have been addressed via internal departmental action plans as applicable. Progress of agreed actions is monitored by the internal Business Risk Management Group.

Full details of the assurance provided by the Audit Manager along with plans to address the recommendations is detailed within the Internal Audit Annual Report for 2025/26.

## **External Audit**

The Service's external audit arrangements are facilitated by Audit Wales in respect of Audit of Accounts, Proper arrangements, Continuous Improvement, and the Sustainable Development Principle. Audit reports and certificates of compliance have been presented as required to Performance, Audit and Scrutiny Committee and Fire Authority meetings during 2025/26.

During 2025/26, in accordance with statutory timelines, the Authority presented the unaudited Statement of Accounts 2024/25 to Audit Wales on 29 May 2025. The Auditor General is responsible for providing an opinion on whether the financial statements give a true and fair view of the financial position of the Authority and the Firefighters' Pension Fund Account and its income and expenditure for the year that ended. Following the audit process, the Auditor General issued an unqualified opinion on the financial statements in July 2025.

Since Audit Wales published its report "Governance of Fire and Rescue Authorities" in September 2024, Welsh Government launched a consultation in August 2025 "Consultation on the reform of fire and rescue authorities in Wales 2025" to seek views on proposals to reform how fire and rescue authorities are governed and funded.

As a result of the consultation Welsh Government published its consultation – summary of responses for the "Reform of Governance and Funding Arrangements for Fire and Rescue Authorities in Wales 2025" in March 2026 and subsequently have enacted secondary legislation changing how the fire and rescue authorities in Wales are governed and funded by reducing the number of members on this Authority from 25 to 9 from May 2027 and the introduction of revised budget-setting arrangements and continued engagement with constituent local authorities for budget setting from 2026/27.

The Welsh Government published the new Fire and Rescue National Framework 2026 in March 2026, which sets out the priorities for Fire and Rescue Authorities for the next 3-5 years, with effect from 30 March 2026.

The Service will plan for the governance and funding changes enacted by The Fire and Rescue Services (National Framework and Variation of Combination Schemes) Wales Order 2026 and review the Authority's priorities to align with the Fire and Rescue National Framework 2026.

## **Strategic and Service Director Assurances**

The Authority has responsibility for conducting an annual review of the effectiveness of its governance framework. The review of effectiveness is informed by the work of the Senior Managers responsible for the development and maintenance of the governance environment, the Corporate Communications and Business Development department and by comments made by the External Auditors and other review agencies.

The CIPFA Statement on the Role of the Chief Financial Officer (CFO) in Local Government (2016) demands that assurance is provided on several governance arrangements relating to the organisation, including financial control, reporting, approach to decision-making, compliance with relevant codes and the influence of the Chief Finance Officer within the organisation. These have been considered within the context of this Statement, and it has been established that the Authority's arrangements conform to the CIPA requirements.

The Authority has in place, via Internal Audit, a comprehensive assurance assessment process to ensure that electronic data is secure and configured to current best practices to protect the organisation. The results of these assurances provide a positive opinion, but there are opportunities for improving the internal control environment to further mitigate risks.

The Internal Audit programme referred to in earlier paragraphs obtained assurances from the Service's Executive Board around the arrangements for managing its recognised core risk areas. This reflects the Executive Directors' responsibilities for both the management of risk and the effectiveness of controls. These discussions were also informed by the regular assurance reports presented to the Performance, Audit and Scrutiny Committee by the Section 151 Officer, the Monitoring Officer, Internal Audit and External Audit.

## **Governance issues to be addressed in 2026/27**

Over the next twelve months, the Service will continue to deliver critical services to the communities it serves.

Led by the Service's Executive Leadership Team, the key focus areas for 2026/27 include:

- Delivery of outstanding actions from prior years, including Internal and External Audit recommendations.
- Implementation of Fire and Rescue Authority governance reforms and preparation for the enhanced statutory inspection regime.
- Strengthening financial governance through revised budget-setting arrangements and continued engagement with constituent local authorities.

- Review and update the Procurement Strategy to align with Welsh Government social partnership objectives.
- Embedding Service Behaviours, organisational development pathways and improved appraisal arrangements.
- Addressing organisational culture, workforce planning, ICT resilience and overall internal and external governance arrangements.

The continuing impact of the increased demand for public sector services, against the settlements received by its Constituent Authorities and spending reductions in the public sector, will continue to be carefully considered by the Authority in determining its Medium-Term Financial Strategy.

The Service will continue to monitor the progress on any new thematic reviews undertaken by the Chief Fire and Rescue Advisor, and any other changes to how we are governed and advise the Authority on any implications for the Service.

We propose, over the coming year, to take actions relating to the above matters and others to further enhance our governance arrangements and reassure ourselves that we have robust procedures, processes, and arrangements in place to ensure we are fully accountable. An update on the outstanding actions from previous years' Action Plans and our Action Plan for 2026/27 are detailed below.

## Updates on outstanding actions from previous years (as per AGS 2024/25)

<b>Governance</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>	<b>Planned Action</b>	<b>Current Status</b>
Internal Audit recommendations	Relevant Heads of Service	Reflect on recommendations from Internal Audit and build them into action plans.	Interim monitoring of recommendations and management responses is undertaken by the Service's Business Risk Management Group. Internal Audit has completed its follow-up review for 2024/25, the report was presented to the Authority's Performance, Audit and Scrutiny Committee in July 2025.  Status: Complete
External Audit recommendations	Relevant Heads of Service	Reflect on recommendations from External Audit and build them into action plans.	Monitoring of recommendations and actions is undertaken by the Service's Business Risk Management Group.  Status: Complete
Community Risk Management Plan 2040	Head of Community Risk Management Plan Team	Embed new procedures, processes and frameworks in line with the Authority's Community Risk Management Plan 2040.	A new Communication, Engagement and Marketing Strategy 2024/2027, aligned to the Service's CRMP

	<p>Head of Corporate Communications and Business Development</p>	<p>These will need to include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A review of the Improvement Planning Framework</li> <li>• A system to embed, promote, manage and measure adherence to the Authority's new behaviours.</li> <li>• A mechanism to report progress against the Improvement and Wellbeing Objectives contained in the Plan.</li> </ul> <p>A new Communication, Marketing and Engagement Strategy which considers the new Plan, the strategic intent it outlines and the process by which improvements will be searched for, selected, implemented and captured.</p>	<p>2040, was published in July 2024 and continues to be delivered subject to its scheduled review in 2027.</p> <p>The Service has embedded a process of continual engagement with staff and the public. The Community Risk Management Team has amalgamated it's Have Your Say survey, which looks to appraise the service delivered to our communities and its shaping survey, which looks for feedback on the improvements proposed to be made through our Community Risk Management Plan 2040. This work was carried out through the Community Risk Management Plan 2040 Objective 6 Work Group and is aligned to the strategic intent of the Service and its desired outcomes.</p>
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			Status: Ongoing
Organisational Culture	Executive Leadership Team  Service Leadership Team  Culture and Inclusion Board  Culture and Inclusion Working Group	<p>Introduce an action plan to monitor progress against the findings of the Service's Cultural Audit undertaken in 2023.</p> <p>In collaboration with North Wales Fire and Rescue Service, undertake an independent external review of progress against the Service's cultural journeys, as per the terms of reference set out by the Welsh Government. Both reviews will commence in June 2024 and the findings will be published to both Fire Authorities and Welsh Government in November 2024.</p> <p>Continue to progress and provide updates to the Welsh Government against the recommendations within the HMICFRS's Values and Culture in Fire and Rescue Services report.</p> <p>Continue to progress and provide updates to the Welsh Government against the recommendations within South Wales Fire and Rescue</p>	<p>Good progress is being made in improving organisational culture, with the Service moving from understanding the issues into a clear rebuild and embedding phase. This work is being supported by the appointment of Senseia as external cultural specialists, who have been working with leaders across the Service to build shared understanding, clearer expectations of behaviour and stronger leadership ownership of culture. A long-term Culture Strategy is planned for development in 2026/27, alongside improvements to professional standards processes, stronger Speak Up arrangements and an increased focus on early intervention and</p>

		Service's Independent Review of Culture.	<p>organisational learning.</p> <p>The Wellbeing Strategy is now live and being actively rolled out, with dedicated roles, refreshed engagement activity and improved workforce support. Recruitment, appraisal and learning and development processes are also being updated to better reflect the culture the Service wants to see. Overall, progress is steady and positive, with culture increasingly treated as a core leadership responsibility rather than a standalone initiative.</p> <p>Status: Ongoing.</p>
Compliments, Complaints and Comments Procedure	Head of Human Resources	A review of the Service's Compliments, Complaints and Comments Procedure is required to align with revised internal processes for dealing with such matters.	An interim updated comments, compliments and complaints procedure was agreed by ELT at its July 2025 meeting and published under

			<p>an Employment Relations Update. It is an interim procedure due to the ongoing review of responsibilities and reporting lines, which are yet to be agreed.</p> <p>Status: Ongoing</p>
ICT Cyber Security	Head of Information and Communication Technology	A robust strategy has been developed and will continue to be implemented to address the recommendations set out within a Cyber Security Resilience Audit Report.	<p>We currently have a number of ongoing projects in this area. We are following the NCSC Cyber Action Framework as part of the NFCC and as part of the WLGA project.</p> <p>We are also utilising several other Cyber Security recommendations from trusted sources and progressing with the Cyber Action Plan, with 10 out of 38 complete and 25 in progress.</p> <p>Status: Ongoing</p>
Digitisation Strategy	Head of Information and Communication Technology	To develop a digitisation strategy and delivery plan.	A digital automation strategy is being developed; however, completion is linked to some work with the

			<p>HR supplier, which is currently delayed. The Automation strategy is planned for Dec 2025.</p> <p>Status: Ongoing</p>
<p>Update our Strategic Assessment of the External Environment Document</p>	<p>Head of CRMP</p>	<p>Systematically analyse the external factors that can impact the Service's operations and strategic decisions. This analysis will help identify opportunities and threats, enabling the Service to adapt and thrive in a dynamic environment.</p>	<p>The Strategic Assessment of the External Environment was updated in August 2025, and Version 2 of the document was published in November 2025.</p> <p>Recognising the geopolitical issues currently ongoing, the new Fire and Rescue Service National Framework Document and the wider work going on associated with the reform of Fire and Rescue Authorities in Wales, the document will be reviewed during 2026/27.</p> <p>Status: Ongoing</p>
<p>Strategic Workforce Planning</p>	<p>Head of Human Resources</p>	<p>Review and further develop strategic workforce planning processes supported by a formal workforce planning procedure.</p>	<p>A draft Workforce Planning Procedure has been developed and will progress through the internal</p>

			<p>governance process. The draft Workforce Planning Procedure will need to be embedded in the organisation, supported by internal processes.</p> <p>Status: Ongoing</p>
CIPFA Financial Management Code	Head of Finance	Full self-assessment was completed in 2021/22. Review current practices against the Financial Management Code to identify and implement improvements to strengthen controls.	<p>A review of the CIPFA Financial Management Code will commence in October 2025 to allow consultation, with a report to be presented to PASC in May 2026.</p> <p>Status: Ongoing</p>
Review of our Internal Governance and Decision-Making Process	Executive Leadership Team  Service Leadership Team	A new approach to strategic decision-making was introduced on 1 April 2024, an evaluation will be undertaken to assure ourselves of its effectiveness, with a report to be provided post-completion to confirm the approach meets the needs of the Service and supports our governance commitments.	<p>A 12-month evaluation was scheduled to take place during Summer 2025. However, this was superseded by the “Blueprint for Change” workshop, which overlapped in themes and also explored decision making and organisational structure.</p> <p>With this in mind, the Executive Leadership</p>

			<p>Team has now been working with Academi Wales to explore the current governance and decision-making process of the organisation, paying cognisance to your current processes and feedback received at the “Blueprint for Change” workshop. It is intended that any proposed changes as part of this work will be presented back into the Service Leadership Team for final agreement before being rolled out.</p> <p>Status: Ongoing</p>
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## 2026/27 Action Plan

<b>Governance</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>	<b>Planned Action</b>	<b>Target Date</b>
Prior Years' Action Plans	Relevant Heads of Service	Review to ensure all actions identified are addressed.	See updates in the table above.
External Audit recommendations	Relevant Heads of Service	Reflect on recommendations from External Audit and build them into action plans.	As agreed with External Audit.
Internal Audit Recommendations	Relevant Heads of Service	Reflect on recommendations from Internal Audit and build them into action plans.	As agreed with Internal Audit.
Reform of Fire and Rescue Authorities in Wales	Monitoring Officer / Corporate Governance Manager	<p>Implement revised FRA membership model with reduced representation from local authorities, together with additional expert members.</p> <p>Prepare for new secondary legislation covering Authority membership and budget-setting arrangements.</p> <p>Strengthen governance, accountability and scrutiny to address identified issues in leadership, performance, and culture across fire and rescue services.</p> <p>Improve Member capability and equality governance through strengthened training and compliance with the Equality Act and Public Sector Equality Duty.</p>	June 2027

		Develop a new Authority constitution to reflect the revised governance model, new membership structure, accountability arrangements and legislative changes.	
Implement required changes to support the enhanced statutory inspection regime introduced by Welsh Government.	Assistant Chief Fire Officer/Corporate Head of Organisational Risk	Prepare for structured inspections that will be introduced as part of the Welsh Government's governance reform programme.	December 2026
Budget-setting reform and consultation with Local Authorities	Section 151 Officer/Head of Finance	Maintain transparent budget-setting processes by continuing to engage and consult with constituent local authorities as part of the Welsh Government's governance and finance reforms.	September 2026
Procurement Strategy	Head of Procurement	Review our Procurement Strategy in line with updated guidance from the Welsh Government's Social Partnership Procurement Objectives	July 2026
Review our Appraisals Process	Head of People and Organisational Development	Early discussions have taken place to identify how the Service's Behaviours can now be embedded within the Service's Appraisal process, as well as to explore alternative software options to improve usability and functionality of the system.	March 2027
Organisational Development Pathways	Head of People and Organisational Development	Finalise Organisational Development Pathways for all roles across the Service and embed them into the appraisal process and individual development plans.	February 2027

<p>Fire and Rescue National Framework 2026</p>	<p>Chief Fire Officer / Executive Leadership Team</p>	<p>Implement and embed the requirements of the Fire and Rescue National Framework for Wales 2026, ensuring alignment of Service plans, governance arrangements and performance frameworks with national priorities.</p> <p>This will include reviewing and updating the Community Risk Management Plan 2040, strengthening arrangements for risk-based resource deployment, prevention activity, leadership, collaboration and organisational culture, and ensuring continued compliance with statutory obligations under the Framework.</p>	<p>March 2027</p>
<p>Executive Leadership Team (ELT) Structure</p>	<p>Chief Fire Officer / Executive Leadership Team</p>	<p>Implement and embed the revised Executive Leadership Team structure developed during 2025/26, ensuring clear roles, responsibilities and accountability arrangements are in place.</p> <p>This will include supporting the transition to a streamlined leadership model, integrating new roles, and aligning portfolios to organisational priorities, with a focus on strengthening leadership capacity, cultural improvement and delivery of the Community Risk Management Plan 2040.</p>	<p>March 2027</p>

# The Governance Statement

The Authority considers that its governance arrangements for 2025/26 continue to be regarded as fit for purpose. The Authority's Code of Corporate Governance sets out in detail the Authority's Governance Framework, which is consistent with the CIPFA / SOLACE Delivering Good Governance in Local Government Framework (2016). The Authority has assessed and can confirm that the arrangements detailed within the Code are in place.

It is the view, therefore, of the Monitoring Officer and the Section 151 Officer, that the review of the governance arrangements for the financial year 2025/26 has, in the main, been satisfactory. We believe that the evidence provided demonstrates that the Corporate Governance in this organisation is effective, existing arrangements are fit for purpose, and the Authority is well placed to meet its strategic aims, to achieve its intended outcomes for citizens and service users. The organisation operates in an economical, effective, efficient and ethical manner.

The Authority recognise its responsibility as a public service organisation to both provide a vision for the community it serves and to lead by example in its decision-making and other processes and actions, with Members and Officers acting in accordance with high standards of conduct.

## Certification

We have been advised on the implications of the review of the effectiveness of the governance framework by Senior Management and the Performance, Audit and Scrutiny Committee. Actions identified to further develop the Authority's Governance arrangements to ensure continuous improvement of the Authority's systems are in place.

We pledge our commitment that over the coming year, we will take steps to further enhance our governance arrangements. We are satisfied that we will address the need for any improvements that were identified in our review of effectiveness and will monitor their implementation and operation as part of our next annual review.

Signed:

Chair of the Performance, Audit and Scrutiny Committee

Date:

Signed:

Chief Fire Officer

Date: