

MERSEYSIDE FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY			
MEETING OF THE:	AUDIT COMMITTEE		
DATE:	26 JUNE 2025	REPORT NO:	DFP/05/2526
PRESENTING OFFICER	DIRECTOR OF FINANCE AND PROCUREMENT, MIKE REA		
RESPONSIBLE OFFICER:	DIRECTOR OF FINANCE AND PROCUREMENT MIKE REA	REPORT AUTHOR:	DIRECTOR OF FINANCE AND PROCUREMENT MIKE REA
OFFICERS CONSULTED:	STRATEGIC LEADERSHIP TEAM		
TITLE OF REPORT:	FORVIS MAZARS (MFRA EXTERNAL AUDITORS) AUDIT STRATEGY MEMORANDUM 2024/2025 DRAFT		

APPENDICES:	APPENDIX A: FORVIS MAZARS AUDIT STRATEGY MEMORANDUM FOR YEAR ENDING 2024/25 DRAFT
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Purpose of Report

1. To present to Members Forvis Mazars Audit Strategy Memorandum that outlines the Auditor's approach to auditing the Authority's 2024/2025 financial statements.

Recommendation

2. It is recommended that Members note Forvis Mazars 2024/2025 Audit Strategy Memorandum and the timing of the Authority's 2024/2025 audit of the financial statements.

Introduction and Background

3. The Authority is required to prepare a set of financial statements annually as required by the relevant codes and regulations. The deadline for the production of the 2024/25 unaudited financial statements is the end of June 2025.
4. The financial statements must then be audited by an independent auditor, who will then issue an opinion on the statements. Members will be aware the Authority chose to opt into the Public Sector Audit Appointments (PSAA) national scheme for the appointing of the Authority's Auditors. Forvis Mazars were appointed as the Authority's Auditor.
5. Between 8 February and 7 March 2024 the then Department for Levelling-Up Housing and Communities (DLUHC) consulted on amending the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 as part of measures to tackle the backlog of unaudited

local body accounts in England. The proposals consulted upon included setting a statutory backstop date to clear the backlog of unaudited accounts up-to-and-including financial year 2022/23. They also included setting backstop dates for financial years 2024/25 to 2027/28 to enable the local audit system to recover.

6. Following the consultation the government set the following statutory deadlines for these years:
 - 2024/25: 27th February 2026
 - 2025/26: 31st January 2027
 - 2026/27: 30th November 2027
 - 2027/28: 30th November 2028

It is the aspiration of the government and key local audit system partners that, in the public interest, local audit recovers as early in this five-year period as possible.

7. For financial years 2024/25 to 2027/28, the date by which MFRA should publish 'draft' (unaudited) accounts will change from 31 May to 30 June following the financial year to which they relate.
8. Members are asked to note Forvis Mazars Audit Strategy Memorandum Report as attached to this report as Appendix A.

Equality and Diversity Implications

9. There are no equality and diversity implications contained within this report.

Staff Implications

10. There are no staff implications contained within this report.

Legal Implications

11. The regulations require the unaudited financial statements for 2024/25 to be prepared by 30th June 2025, and the statements to be audited by 27th February 2026.

Financial Implications & Value for Money

12. The 2024/2025 external audit fee, £107,717 has been included within the budget.

Risk Management and Health & Safety Implications

13. Failure to prepare the financial statements or have them audited within the statutory deadlines may have an adverse impact on the Authority's financial management reputation.

Environmental Implications

14. There are no environmental implications contained within this report.

Contribution to Our Vision: To be the best Fire & Rescue Service in the UK.

Our Purpose: Here to serve, Here to protect, Here to keep you safe.

15. The achievement of sound financial administration and VFM arrangements is essential if the Service is to achieve the Authority's vision.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

NONE

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

DLUHC Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities

MFRA Merseyside Fire and Rescue Authority

PSAA Public Sector Audit Appointments