

MERSEYSIDE FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY			
MEETING OF THE:	AUDIT COMMITTEE		
DATE:	30 JUNE 2026	REPORT NO:	DFP/01/2627
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 (SLT)		
TITLE OF REPORT:	FORVIS MAZARS (MFRA EXTERNAL AUDITORS) AUDIT STRATEGY MEMORANDUM 2025/26 DRAFT		

APPENDICES:	APPENDIX A: FORVIS MAZARS AUDIT STRATEGY MEMORANDUM FOR YEAR ENDING 2025/26
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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 2025/26 financial statements.

Recommendation

2. It is recommended that Members note the contents of Forvis Mazars 2025/26 Audit Strategy Memorandum and the scope, approach and timeline of the Authority's 2025/26 audit of the financial statements.

Introduction and Background

3. The Authority is required to prepare a set of financial statements each year in accordance with the relevant codes of practice and statutory regulations. For the 2025/26 financial year, the deadline for the production of the unaudited financial statements is 30 June 2026.
4. Once prepared, the financial statements must be audited by an independent external auditor, who is responsible for issuing an opinion on whether the statements present a true and fair view. Members will be aware that the Authority has opted into the Public Sector Audit Appointments (PSAA) national scheme for the appointment of its auditors. Through this arrangement, Forvis Mazars has been appointed as the Authority's external auditor.

5. Following a government consultation on proposed amendments to the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015, changes have been introduced to help address the national backlog of unaudited local authority accounts in England. As part of these measures, statutory backstop dates have been set for the completion of audits for the financial years 2025/26 through to 2027/28. The deadlines introduced by government are 31 January 2027 for 2025/26, 30 November 2027 for 2026/27, and 30 November 2028 for 2027/28.
6. In addition, for the same period (2025/26 to 2027/28), the deadline for the Authority to publish its draft (unaudited) accounts has been revised. The publication date has moved from 31 May to 30 June following the end of the relevant financial year.
7. The Director of Finance and Procurement agreed to provide Members with an update on the progress of the 2025/26 fixed asset exercise in support of the preparation of the 2025/26 Statement of Accounts.
8. The Accounting Team has undertaken a comprehensive review of Property, Plant and Equipment (PPE), meeting with all officers responsible for these assets, including the Fleet Manager, to assess the appropriateness of asset valuations and useful economic lives. This work, incorporating the latest HM Treasury requirements in respect of the valuation of non-investment assets, has ensured that the Authority's asset base is accurately reflected and aligned with current operational use.
9. In parallel, the Financial Accountant has developed revised fixed asset registers and supporting working papers. These enhancements are intended to strengthen the quality and robustness of the underlying information supporting the preparation of the Statement of Accounts.
10. Members are asked to note Forvis Mazars Audit Strategy Memorandum as attached to this report as Appendix A.

Equality and Diversity Implications

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

Staff Implications

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

Legal Implications

13. The regulations require the unaudited financial statements for 2025/26 to be prepared by 30 June 2026, and the statements to be audited by 31 January 2027.

Financial Implications & Value for Money

14. The 2025/2026 external audit fee, £110,733 has been included within the budget.

Risk Management and Health & Safety Implications

15. 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

16. 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.

17. 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

MFRA	M erseyside F ire and R escue A uthority
PSAA	P ublic S ector A udit A ppointments
VFM	V alue F or M oney