

Minutes of the **County Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue Service Audit and Finance Committee meeting** held at Fire HQ on **25 February 2025 at 1430 hours**.

Present:	Cllr R Bell (Chair)
Durham County Council:	Julie Cairns, Lesley Mavin, Alison Batey, Bill Kellet, Richard Bell
Darlington Borough Council:	Andrew Anderson
Independent Person:	
Officers:	Tony Hope Keith Lazzari
External Audit (Mazars):	Smriti Sood James Collins
Secretariat	Emma Walton

Part A

1 Apologies

Apologies were noted from Alan Foster.

2 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

Cllr A Anderson was contacted after the meeting to confirm his agreement to the 4.23% increase (£5 on a Band D property), prior to the recommendation going to the CFA meeting on 17 February 2025.

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 23 January 2025 were agreed as a true and accurate record.

3 Audit Completion Report – Year Ended 31 March 2024

J Collins presented the Audit Completion Report for the Year Ended 31 March 2024. J Collins expressed his thanks and appreciation for CDDFRS Finance Team's cooperation when going through the required processes to complete the audit and sign off the accounts during this time.

J Collins advised Mazars did not identify any evidence to indicate a significant weakness in Value for Money arrangements and there were no significant matters outstanding.

Mazars issued an unqualified audit opinion in the 2023/24 accounts and the audit certificate will follow after work is completed on Whole of Government Accounts.

The report was **agreed** and **noted**.

4 Draft Auditors Annual Report – Year Ended 31 March 2024

J Collins informed the Authority that this document is the public facing report which will go alongside the financial statements, which include further detail on value for money, sustainability, economy and governance.

J Collins assured the members that there was nothing identified that needed raising.

The report was **noted**.

5 Statement of Accounts for the Year Ended 31 March 2024 – External Audit

T Hope introduced the report which sought Members' approval of the Statement of Accounts for County Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue Authority, for the financial year ended 31 March 2024.

Members noted their thanks to T Hope and the wider finance team.

The committee **approved** the Statement of Accounts of County Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue Authority for the financial year ended 31 March 2024.

6 Local Government Finance Settlement – Letters to Government

THope provided members with a copy of the letters sent to government regarding the Local government Finance Settlement, as agreed at the meeting on the 23 January 2025 by the Committee, Appendix A and B.

The letters explained the difficulties facing the Authority following the reduction in grant funding of 3.3% (£410,000) and in addition a shortfall of £214,000 in the National Insurance compensation grant.

To date there had been no acknowledgement to the letters.

Appendix C was the response from CDDFRS to the provisional settlement Consultation, which mirrored the contents of the letters to the MPs.

Members were requested to **note** the letters and response.