



DORSET & WILTSHIRE
FIRE AND RESCUE



Productivity and efficiency plan

2023

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1. INTRODUCTION

The broader economic environment and outlook remains a challenge for all public services such as our own. We have experienced rapid and spiralling inflation and now feeling the effects of significant increases in the prices of goods and services across many areas. We have little scope to secure fixed prices with our suppliers who are often passing on costs associated with supply chain imbalances and significant salary demands and agreements. We also need to fund significant pay awards arising from the cost of living crisis. Volatility, rapid cost increases and on-going uncertainty are making it very difficult for us to plan, deliver and be financially assured. Efficiency and productivity as an all embracing leadership drive is a fundamental mitigation for us and central to our approach to securing greater financial stability.

From an income perspective, the finance settlement for Fire and Rescue Authorities for 2023-24 did go some way to help contribute to mitigating these funding pressures, by allowing fire and rescue authorities, in 2023-24, to increase council tax in a Band D property by up to £5, without a local referendum. It also increased a number of grants by September CPI inflation.

Nevertheless, pressures remain across the fire sector with regards to ensuring sufficient capacity and funding remain available to meet the spiralling costs of running the Service. As part of the Spending Review 2021/22, the National Fire Chiefs Council and the Local Government Association made a commitment on behalf of the fire sector in England to create 2% of non-pay efficiencies and to increase productivity of the fire sector by 3% by 2024-25.

This efficiency and productivity statement has been requested by the Minister of State for Crime, Policing and Fire. The document augments our efficiency plan required under the Fire and Rescue National Framework for England. More specifically, this document sets out our approach, current position, and future plans to achieving efficiency and productivity gains. Further information about many of the areas described here may be found in the Medium Term Financial Plan 2023-27 available from our website.

2. INCOME, EXPENDITURE & FINANCIAL OUTLOOK

INCOME

Government support

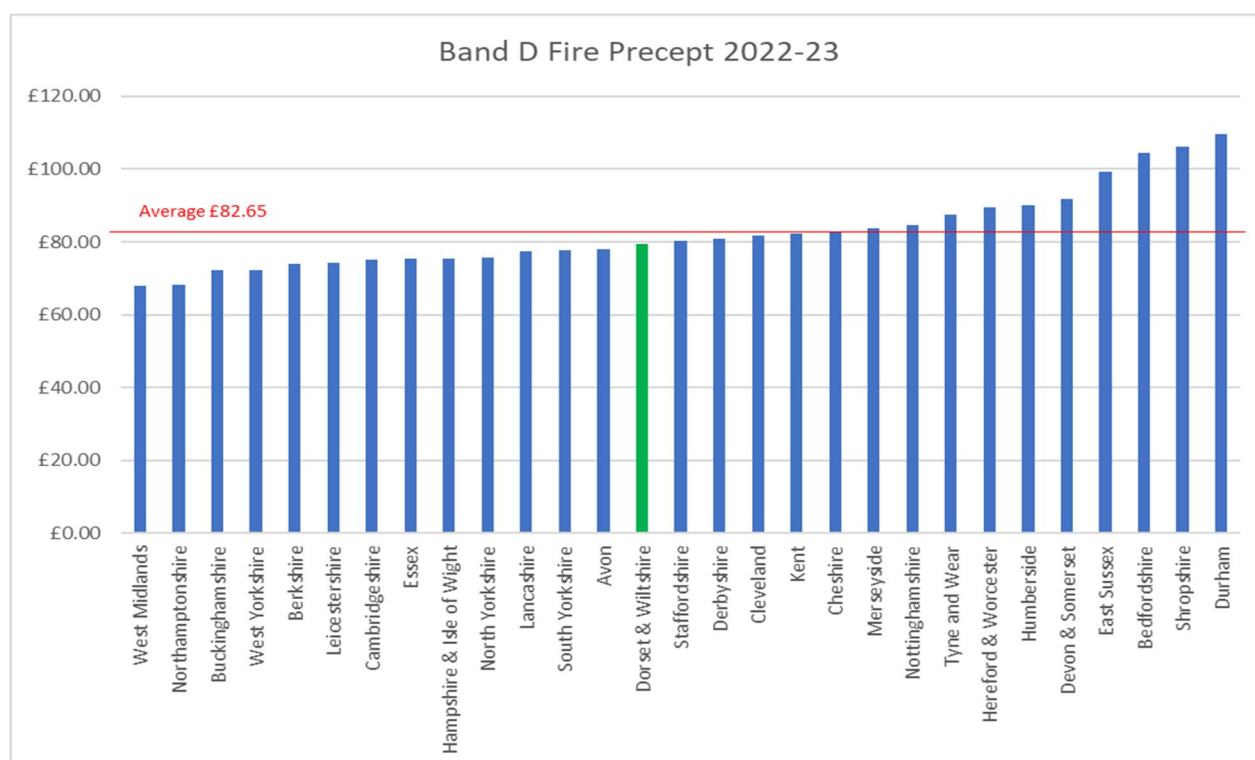
The Final Local Government Finance Settlement announced on 6 February 2023 showed an overall increase in Core Spending Power of £4.6m for 2023-24, although £3.2m of this related to local council tax funding. Our revenue support grant was increased in line with September 2022 CPI of 10.1%, there was a similar increase for assumed business rates income, but a reduction in Top-Up grant reflecting changes from the April 2023 national revaluation of business rates. Although the increase in funding is welcome, overall, our government Settlement Funding Assessment has still reduced from £19.426m (accumulated as two separate Authorities) in 2015-16 to £15.248 in 2023-24, representing a cash reduction of £4.2m or 21.5% over the period since 2015-16.

A new 'Services' grant was provided for in 2022-23, our share of this funding was £721k, but included funding for the increase in employer national insurance (NI) costs from April 2022 related to the Government's new plan for health and social care. With the change in Government policy announced on 22 September 2022 the NI cost element of this grant has been removed and our allocation for 2023-24 is £423k. The Government is providing additional funding for 2023-24 only to ensure that all local authorities, including FRAs, see at least a 3% increase in their Core Spending Power before any decisions about organisational efficiencies, use of reserves or council tax levels. The national total is £133m, with this authority receiving £155k. Only two other FRAs benefit from this funding as well, namely East Sussex and Hereford & Worcester. The Settlement also continues to provide a Rural Services grant to 'super-sparse' areas and our share of this is £58k.

Precepts

The Authority has a history of being a low funding, low spending authority. Currently, only 25% of our funding is provided centrally, with the remaining 75% coming from local council tax funding. This reflects the £5m reduction in central funding that the Authority has seen since 2015-16. The low level of funding inevitably places pressure on levels of fire precept. Our 2022-23 fire precept figure of £79.43 compares to a national average for all standalone FRAs of £82.65 (see graph below).

GRAPH: BAND D FIRE PRECEPT 2022-23 (ALL STAND-ALONE FRAS)



In summary, the table below shows the total funding assumed to 2026-27 based on the finance principles and assumptions outlined in our Medium Term Finance Plan:

TABLE: TOTAL FUNDING REQUIREMENT

Funding requirement	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25	2025-26	2026-27
	Actual	Estimated	Estimated	Estimated	Estimated
	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m
Fire Precept (£m)	44.495	47.971	49.897	51.399	52.943
Council tax Collection Fund Surplus/Deficit (-) (£m)	0.341	0.374	0.000	0.000	0.000
Revenue Support Grant (RSG) (£m)	3.998	4.403	4.491	4.491	4.491
BRR and Top Up grant (£m)	10.453	10.845	11.062	11.062	11.062
Business rates Collection Fund Surplus/Deficit (-) (£m)	(0.261)	(0.288)	(0.288)	(0.288)	(0.288)
Other government grants	2.002	2.686	2.508	2.508	2.508
TOTAL	61.048	65.991	67.670	69.171	70.716

BUDGET REQUIREMENT FOR 2023-24

Taking all of the changes into account, the net budget requirement for 2023-24 is £65.991m as summarised:

TABLE: BUDGET REQUIREMENT 2023-24

Revenue Budget	Budget 2023-24 £m
- Employees	53.850
- Premises	4.393
- Transport	1.658
- Supplies & services	5.896
- Agency & contracted out	2.819
- Democratic representation	0.113
- Capital financing/leasing	4.313
- Income	-6.412
- Transfers to/from reserves	-0.639
Net budget requirement	65.991

MEDIUM TERM FORECAST

The table below shows updated projections of the Authority's budget requirement from 2023-24 to 2026-27 based on the agreed Financial Principles, current data received from our constituent authorities, Service spending proposals and our Strategic Assessment of Risk, previously outlined our Medium Term Finance Plan.

TABLE: FORECASTED REVENUE BUDGET 2023-24 TO 2026-27

Revenue budget	2023-24 £m	2024-25 £m	2025-26 £m	2026-27 £m
- Employees	53.850	54.853	55.662	56.808
- Premises	4.393	4.583	4.662	4.653
- Transport	1.658	1.570	1.487	1.509
- Supplies & services	5.896	5.946	6.228	6.072
- Contract out services	2.819	2.788	2.772	2.779
- Democratic rep	0.113	0.115	0.117	0.117
- Capital financing	4.313	4.613	5.030	5.220
- Reserve transfers	-6.412	-6.164	-5.932	-5.668
- Income	-0.639	-0.549	-0.104	0.094
Service budget requirement	65.991	67.756	69.992	71.585

Looking beyond 2023-24, based on our funding assumptions and forecast spending plans we have indicative funding deficits of £0.084m rising to £0.869m between 2024-25 and 2026-27 respectively:

TABLE: FORECASTED FUNDING GAPS/DEFICITS

Funding gap	2023-24 £m	2024-25 £m	2025-26 £m	2026-27 £m
Total funding	65.991	67.670	69.171	70.716
Estimated net service budget	65.991	67.754	69.993	71.585
Budget surplus (+) / deficit (-)	0.000	-0.084	-0.752	-0.869

CAPITAL EXPENDITURE AND FINANCING

The capital programme, covering the anticipated revised programme for 2022-23 and requirements through to 2026-27, is shown in the table below. The revised amounts shown for 2022-23 include projects carried forward from 2021-22 and anticipated in-year changes to the programme. The capital programme for 2023-24 totals £7.1m, the majority of which will require funding through prudential borrowing.

TABLE: CAPITAL PROGRAMME

Capital programme	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25	2025-26	2026-27
	Estimate	Indicative	Indicative	Indicative	Indicative
Capital Budget	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m
Property/Estates	1.928	1.715	7.305	1.678	1.382
Vehicles	2.100	4.337	2.466	2.627	2.453
Equipment	0.478	0.185	1.013	0.425	1.390
ICT	1.305	0.856	1.210	1.455	0.710
TOTAL	5.811	7.093	11.994	6.185	5.935

Financed By					
Prudential Borrowing	2.566	5.379	10.310	3.668	4.791
Revenue Contributions/Reserves	3.245	1.714	1.684	2.517	1.143
TOTAL	5.811	7.093	11.994	6.185	5.935

Financing the capital programme

At the current time, all available capital receipts of the Authority have been used to finance previous capital expenditure programmes. Previously the Authority has been able to use some reserves to offset long-term borrowing in supporting its capital investment plans. Savings planned in the revenue budget from 2021-22 have allowed the Authority set aside approximately £7m to support future capital investment and reduce borrowing costs. We now plan to transfer a further £3.4m into the Capital Replacement Reserve to further support capital investment. The revenue budget also includes an annual contribution of £100k to support the financing of the capital programme.

The Authority will first utilise all of the funding streams highlighted above as the cheapest form of funding, but any shortfall of funding has to be made up from prudential borrowing. The Authority has used internal borrowing for the financing the capital programme for a number of years, i.e., rather than borrowing we have used internal cash flows as this has been more efficient and economical, particularly as investment returns have been at such low levels. This has resulted in an under-borrowing position of £16m on 31 March 2022, and we estimate this strategy has resulted in annual budget savings in excess of £500k. Such a position is not sustainable in the longer term and needs to be balanced with how we utilise our reserves and balances and ensuring that our cash balances are adequate.

The savings made in capital financing costs allow the Authority to set aside £500k each year to reduce the long-term capital financing and borrowing requirements. This is a sensible strategy to reduce the pressure on future budgets from unsustainable rises in capital financing costs.

The capital financing budget currently includes provision for prudential borrowing of £5.4m in respect of 2023-24 programme, with a further £18.8m to be borrowed over the following three years to 2026-27. The estimated total over the four years is therefore £24.2m, which compares to £29.8m in the previous capital strategy when you include the required training centre investment.

RESERVES

General reserve

An annual review of reserves is carried out as part of the budget setting cycle. The Authority has set a financial principle for General Balances to be at £2.5m or 5% of the annual revenue budget, whichever is the higher. A risk assessment of the adequacy of General Balances is carried out annually to determine the extent to which the Authority is exposed to uninsured and unbudgeted losses. The risk assessment for the coming financial year, 2023-24, has been prepared as part of the budget setting process and is shown in the medium term finance plan. The impact and scale of potential losses has been estimated to calculate a potential net financial impact of around £3.4m, increasing due to cost increases. At the start of 2023-24 General Balances are expected to be just over £2.9m, which is sufficient at this stage to mitigate the risk.

Earmarked reserves

We have a number of earmarked reserves which have been established for specific purposes where there have been timing differences at budget setting or year end, or emerging risks or cost pressures. The relevance of, and balance in, each of these is reviewed annually. A significant amount of funding has been set aside in reserves to support the change necessary to deliver the Community Safety Plan particularly the £8m investment necessary to improve our operational training facilities and centres. 'Investment for improvement' reserves have, and are being, used to invest in transformation projects and the development of our people which will support the modernisation of the Service. These 'investment for improvement' reserves, which are subject to regular review, are detailed in the medium-term finance plan:

Unused grants reserves

These reserves relate to grants which have been given to the Authority, which have either not been fully spent or have been received in advance of intended spend. Where a grant has been received in advance, the Authority's policy is to transfer the funding to an earmarked reserve for spending in future years.

TABLE: UNUSED GRANTS RESERVES

Unused grant reserves	Balance 1 Apr 22 £m	Forecast spend 22-23 £m	Forecast Balance 31 Mar 23 £m	Forecast spend 23-24 to 26-27 £m	Forecast Balance 31 Mar 27 £m
Prevention	0.345	-0.112	0.233	-0.233	0.000
National resilience	0.225	-0.050	0.175	-0.175	0.000
Fire protection	0.027	-0.027	0.000	0.000	0.000
Transformation grant	0.318	-0.106	0.212	-0.212	0.000
Emergency Services Mobile Communication Project (ESMCP)	0.750	0.000	0.750	-0.750	0.000
Business rates compensation	1.164	-1.164	0.000	0.000	0.000
Covid-19	0.735	-0.524	0.211	-0.211	0.000
Other small grants	0.521	-0.171	0.350	-0.350	0.000
TOTAL	4.085	-2.154	1.931	-1.931	0.000

Summary - Projected reserve balances

TABLE: SUMMARY - PROJECTED RESERVE BALANCES

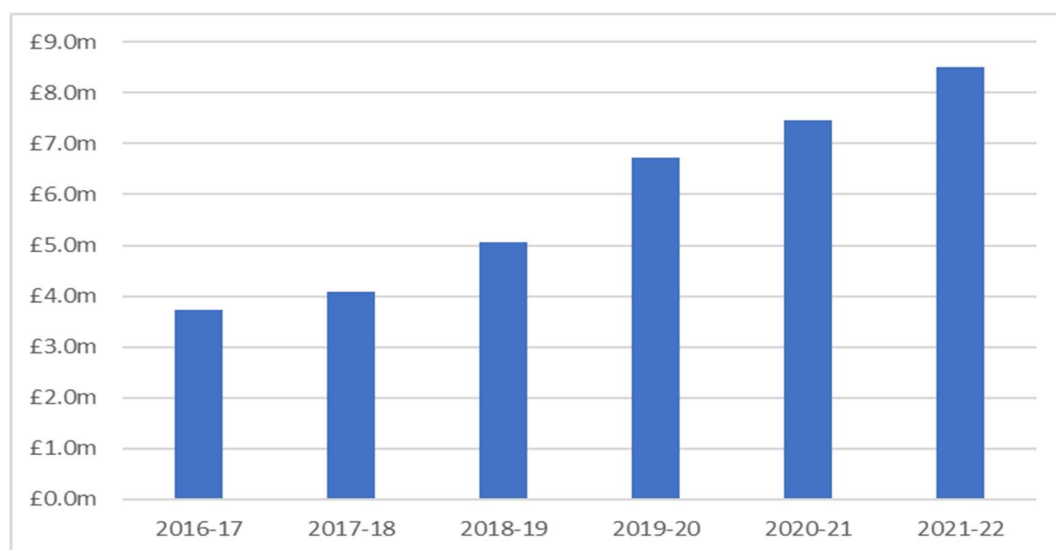
Reserve balances	Balance 1 Apr 22 £m	Forecast spend 22-23 £m	Forecast Balance 31 Mar 23 £m	Forecast spend 23-27 £m	Forecast Balance 31 Mar 27 £m
General reserves	2.884	0.046	2.930	0.217	3.147
Earmarked reserves	16.326	-3.608	12.718	-9.669	3.049
Unused grants reserves	4.085	-2.154	1.931	-1.931	0.000
TOTAL	23.295	-5.716	17.579	-11.383	6.196

3. DELIVERING EFFICIENCY AND PRODUCTIVITY

OUR JOURNEY SO FAR

Since 1 April 2016 when the new Authority and Service was established annual cashable efficiencies of £8.5m had been realised by March 2022. This covered savings of £6.7m delivered by March 2020 aligned to our business case for combining the two legacy fire and rescue services and authorities, £5.8m of which came from staffing changes, and additional savings of £1.8m delivered across the 2020-21 and 2021-22 financial years.

CHART: ANNUAL EFFICIENCY SAVINGS



Savings in 2023-24

In setting the budget requirement for 2023-24 the Service has had to make some tough choices about areas of spend that could be reduced further to help alleviate the pressure of rising costs. This is in spite of the additional funding that we have received.

We have reviewed watch strengths at several wholetime stations whilst still maintaining technical rescue and aerial ladder capability. The review concluded that there was scope to make further reductions should our financial position not improve. In setting the revenue budget for 2023-24 we have reduced total crewing numbers by 28 posts, saving around £1.4m per year.

We have also made some changes to our prevention activities and restructured the team. The changes will allow us to continue with much of the work that we already undertake, but we have stopped youth intervention programmes that are no longer financially viable. These changes have resulted in costs savings of £500k per year from April 2023.

Other savings totalling £179k have also been included in the budget, although some of these are one-off savings.





TABLE: SAVINGS 2023-24

Area of saving	£'000
Wholetime crewing	1,400
Prevention resources	500
Development rates (one off)	54
Supplies and services	53
Other savings and additional income	72
Total savings	2,079

A SOUND REPUTATION

Our 2022 inspection by HMICFRS was undertaken over a period of six weeks and provided an exhaustive and robust external validation and accreditation of the effectiveness and efficiency of the Service. When the results of the inspection were published in January 2023, we were delighted to be judged as 'Outstanding' in the pillar around 'Efficiency' - which is about how everyone in the service spends public money and uses resources - and 'Good' in the two pillars of 'Effectiveness' and 'People.'

Furthermore, within the Efficiency pillar itself, as well as an overall 'Outstanding' judgement, we were also graded as 'Outstanding' against the sub-diagnostic 'Making the best use of its resources'.

Question	This inspection	2018/19
 Efficiency	 Outstanding	Good
Making best use of resources	 Outstanding	Good
Future affordability	 Good	Good

OUR APPROACH AND PLANS

Our approach to ensuring efficiency and productivity is all encompassing and engrained in everything we do. It is a core leadership drive for us that is widely discussed and embedded with our managers and staff. The following section sets out our approach and gives a flavour of some of the successes we have had along with our on-going work or future plans.

UNDERSTANDING INVESTMENT NEED AND DELIVERY

- **Scrutinising every line.** We have an extensive process of costing all functions and budget lines across all departments. This has included zero basing all revenue budgets and reducing expenditure where appropriate. To support this on-going financial exercise, we have also fully considered all of the savings suggested by staff and fed back to them. We have also further strengthened the strategic challenge to our

property improvement programme, with directors now collectively scrutinising the requirement for any works to a much lower level of expenditure than before.

- **Key strategies are in place** to underpin the delivery of the Community Safety Plan that is itself informed by a Strategic Assessment of Risk. These strategies include Community Safety, ICT, Fleet and equipment, Estates, Environment, People and Diversity and Inclusion. Future investment needs stemming from these strategies are captured within the Medium Term Finance Plan. These strategies ensure that the work of our departments and stations are fully aligned to the needs and aspirations of the Service and that time and money is used on things that are central to the delivery of the strategic aspiration set out in the Community Safety Plan. These strategies also support our pursuit of achieving to ISO 55001 (Asset management) that we are in the final stages of being accredited to. This standard has at its heart efficiency, effectiveness, and cost management. The standard is particularly central to our approach given that fleet, equipment, and property investments represents such a huge element of our non-pay expenditure.
- **Business cases underpin all investments.** Where a new investment need is identified through either a key strategy or from a department, a comprehensive business case is then formulated and approved. Our business case management process challenges organisational need, whole life investment requirements, and both the deliverables and benefits to be realised. Once scrutinised and approved, these are tracked through performance management and business benefits reviewed in line with the approved business case. Any in-year departmental underspends are centrally collated and are prioritised towards funding business cases. Our external auditors have recently assessed our business case management practices and given a 'substantial' assurance rating against them.
- **Project management drives complex work.** To ensure that investment needs are managed in a coordinated and cost efficient manner, the business case process determines if a more structured project framework is required to be followed. Where it is, a clear methodology exists within the Service's planning and performance management system. Our approach to project management and evaluation has received a 'substantial' assurance from external auditors.

BENCHMARKING AND ADOPTING GOOD PRACTICE

- **Benchmarking is used to see how we are doing.** As part of our desire to benchmark our performance, we have a range of benchmarking arrangements. These include benchmarking across a range of key performance indicators with like sized fire and rescue services; using the HMICFRS process to identify and appropriately adopt best practice elsewhere within the sector. We also actively participate in a number of specialist groups to identify and adopt better practices in a range of areas such as fleet, equipment, people, risk, environment, financial management and operations. In addition to this, we work closely with our auditors to design an audit programme based upon risk and the eight themes of a healthy organisation. This enables us to review and strengthen our approach as well as provide assurance.

PERFORMANCE AND PRODUCTIVITY MANAGEMENT

- **Performance and scrutiny arrangements are in place.** The Service has extensive and comprehensive planning and performance management arrangements aligned to the HMICFRS methodology. All departmental have a performance dashboard that is reviewed on a monthly basis. As well as monthly performance monitoring, performance against the Service Delivery Plan is comprehensively reviewed on a

quarterly basis by a cross directorate Service Delivery Team that is chaired by the Deputy Chief Fire Officer. Performance is reported in a structured way against the HMICFRS methodology to Members via meetings of the Authority, Finance and Audit and Local Performance and Scrutiny committees. These reports are achieved in the form of detailed presentations to the Authority and the Annual report.

- **VFM tool and dashboard are used at all levels.** We have developed a comprehensive VFM tool and dashboard. This tool enables us to better understand and consistently quantify a number of internal and public facing activities to determine and report upon costs and cashable, non-cashable and societal savings within a 6-monthly VFM statement and through our performance management reporting arrangements. For example, based upon a 1% reduction on accidental dwelling fires, last year, our safe and well programme generated £4,516,795 in societal savings with a cost avoidance saving for us of £42,862 and a non-cashable saving of £46,304. Our road traffic education programme, based on a 1% success rate delivered societal savings of £10,317,290, a cost avoidance of £40,450 and non-cashable savings of £56,668. We believe that by setting our value in tangible monetary terms this has helped us secure £1,086,280 in sponsorship since 2017 including a grant of £285k from Scotia Gas Network/Wales & West Utilities to fit carbon monoxide and Wi-Fi alarms.
- **Operational productivity is a key focus.** All stations have a station performance 'How's my Team Doing' dashboard. This captures the key activities undertaken including the time taken, time when the activity was undertaken, and the key outputs delivered. These dashboards, which are aligned to the performance management framework and associated meeting structures, enable us to accurately monitor productivity of wholetime crews. Each station has a bespoke station risk profile and action plan to ensure that its activities and resources are effectively targeted to address the areas of highest community risk. Together these systems are used to inform station management practices to improve efficiency, effectiveness, and productivity.
- **Evaluating our prevention programmes.** We have conducted a comprehensive evaluation of our prevention programmes and its associated activities. This evaluation has considered the inputs, outputs and outcomes so far achieved and has both reviewed the VFM and performance management arrangements. All key partnerships have been scrutinised. Amongst other things, this work is being used to tighten and prioritise resource allocation and to identify actions to deliver improved efficiency and productivity.

PROCUREMENT AND CONTRACT MANAGEMENT

- **Procurement and basket of goods help us focus on VFM.** The Service has a structured approach to procurement that maximises the use of national frameworks and other collaborative opportunities to deliver economies of scale. Pre-engagement activity occurs with suppliers. For example, in 2022, in preparation for the procurement for the 2023-24 estates programme we held an all-day engagement session – trying to get more local companies to understand and be able to tender for the work. We aim to do more of this as we move forward with procurement. Procurement plans are being aligned within the Networked Fire Services Partnership (NFSP) to create further opportunities for joint procurement and the purchase of common fleet and equipment as practices become more consistent across the partnership. In addition, the Service undertakes a 'basket of goods' exercise that has shown that our spend across this nationally selected range of goods is below the average for fire and rescue services in England. Our external auditors have recently

assessed our procurement practices and given a 'substantial' assurance rating against them.

- **Contract management is a key discipline.** All of our contract managers must complete an e-learning programme and are required to undertake appropriate contract management to ensure that VFM is being achieved. Contract lifetimes are awarded and maintained in line with financial regulations to ensure VFM is maintained. We are also actively monitoring critical suppliers and taking as much action as we can to mitigate increases from supply chain disruption and potential cost increases.
- **Frameworks and collaborative procurement are routinely used.** At every opportunity we take advantage of framework contracts and collaborative approaches within our sector and beyond. By way of example, we are working through the Networked Fire Services Partnership to procure a new command and control system; Southwest Police Procurement Department on business travel; Devon & Somerset Fire and Rescue Service on station mobilising equipment and the National Fire Chiefs Council e-tendering system. There are many more examples. In addition, we often lead the development of collaborative procurement, for example, we led a collaborative procurement to replace and upgrade mobile data terminals. As well as achieving our own savings of £236k, Crown Commercial Services have estimated that efficiency savings to the value of £805k have been achieved through the collaborative procurement process.

RESOURCES TO RISK AND DEMAND

- **A strategic fire cover review is being undertaken.** A Service wide fire cover review is well underway. This will support future decisions about operational cover, resource disposition, duty systems and the balance between prevention/protection and response. Significant analysis has already been undertaken at a strategic level through the strategic risk assessment. This assessment has been informed by a higher degree of 'bottom-up' analysis at a group level allowing us to better capture local pressures, risks, and planning aspirations. This fire cover review is being used to inform the next iteration of our Community Safety Plan that is due in 2024.
- **Structural reviews are regularly undertaken.** The Service faces an array of challenges many of which are new or require a revised strategic consideration depending upon external factors or legislative changes. Every two years the Strategic Assessment of Risk is updated to help ensure that the Service is looking strategically at this changing environment. To support this, the Service also has comprehensive workforce planning arrangements to help identify key issues, investment needs and changes to skills and workforce requirements. Since forming the new Service in 2016, all corporate departments, non-station based departments and senior management have been rationalised and realigned against the new vision and single ways of working. We have also synchronised working patterns, start and finish times and work practices through an extensive programme of procedural harmonisation. Service and staffing structures are therefore routinely reviewed at a strategic or tactical level to help ensure that the right skills, competencies, and capacity exists to meet current and future needs. Our strategic workforce planning arrangements were deemed to be '*Outstanding*' in our last HMICFRS inspection.
- **Technical rescue provision has been reviewed.** We reviewed the specialist technical rescue provision and disposition from a Service-wide perspective. The aim was to provide a more consistent and effective method that better aligns resource deployment to demand and risk. This review concluded that our technical rescue resources would be best provided through a three-station model providing a full technical rescue capability at each station. This is now in place.

- **Aerial ladder platforms (ALPs) have been rationalised.** We have three ALPs that are crewed by wholetime staff and one that is crewed by on-call staff. This review looked at the number and disposition of these vehicles across the Service and was aligned with the technical rescue review. We have significantly reduced future capital spend by removing the requirement to replace a fourth ALP when it comes to end of life. This will save us around £750k for the one-off purchase and £10k in maintenance costs.
- **'Second away' fire appliances have been reviewed.** We currently have 14 solely on-call stations with a 'second away' pumping appliance and one wholetime station at Poole with a wholetime 'second away'. The locations of these appliances were determined by the Integrated Risk Management Plans of the two legacy fire and services that were then combined. We assessed the numbers and locations of these appliances against a range of factors including both current and future risk and demand, and current availability. The review indicated that an initial five appliances could be removed over the long term from the capital investment programme without significantly compromising our operational response arrangements. We are currently including this analysis within our strategic fire cover review before moving forward with this.
- **A wide range of duty systems operate across the Service.** There are a range of duty systems operating across the Service, these include: a traditional wholetime shift of two days, two nights and four off, day crewed duty system providing a wholetime response from the station during the day and an on-call response at night, day crewing shifts, and nine day fortnight shifts for operational staff not attached to a station. All of these shift patterns have staff working at firefighter and supervisory manager levels providing flexible options for staff needs. Firefighter roles have been introduced in some functional areas to further improve flexibility and career opportunities as a direct result of feedback from the operational women's network. On call staff operate a wide variety of contracts ranging from 40 to 120 hours per week, in addition they all have the opportunity to undertake fixed term contracts on wholetime stations covering a broad range of working patterns. These include being posted to a specific watch at a station and following the shift pattern or working day shifts only or weekday shifts only etc and are based upon the need of the Service to optimise availability of appliances. A small crewing management team optimise this availability.
- **Wholetime crewing reviews are regularly undertaken.** Wholetime shift start, and finish times are aligned Service wide regardless of shift pattern. These shift times have been reviewed and amended to optimise productivity. In addition, we have reviewed the need to reduce watch strength at several wholetime stations whilst still maintaining technical rescue and aerial ladder capability. The review concluded that there was scope to make further reductions should our financial position not improve. In setting the revenue budget for 2023-24 we have reduced total crewing numbers by 28 posts, saving around £1.4m per year.
- **Daytime duty systems have and are being reviewed.** We reviewed the crewing model at Ferndown to determine the most suitable and cost-effective crewing model to meet current and future risk and demand. This review concluded that Ferndown could move to being an on-call only station and that we should look to enhance resources in south east Wiltshire area where the risk and demand profile analysis indicates the requirement for a wholetime resource during the day. We now plan to introduce a wholetime day crewed structure at Amesbury Fire Station to provide improved fire cover in the south east Wiltshire. The Amesbury day-crewed structure will require 12 wholetime posts at an annual cost of around £600k.

- **On-call duty system is an efficient ‘pay-as-you-go’ service.** In addition to the arrangements on wholetime stations, the Service currently has on-call firefighters operating from 47 of its 50 stations. This provides an extremely efficient ‘pay as you go’ response service. On-call pay modelling has been overhauled to improve availability whilst providing contractual flexibility. In order to support a balanced budget, we have also removed one on-call firefighter post from most stations and sections from the staffing establishment. An evaluation framework has been established to support our approach to on-call salary management. Imminently all stations will have a regular report, showing all cost information including wholetime and on-call station running costs compared with similar stations and previous years usage. This information is electronic and aggregated to enable strategic and tactical managerial oversight and cost control. We also vice-chair the NFCC workstream for the on-call duty system.
- **Fire crews carry out combined prevention, protection, and operational checks** to ascertain whether further action is required to make the building as safe as possible from fire, but this also helps fire crews have a better understanding of the issues they may face if they were ever called to a fire at those premises, thus aiding and improving operational response. The risk information through the associated audits is captured at scene and entered directly into a tablet device. Operational crews are able to make priority referrals whilst on site to provide safeguarding and support our customers. The real benefit is that fire crews can directly submit information relating to the premises thus removing the need to complete additional emails, forms, or referrals on their return to the fire station. All activity conducted by wholetime crews is recorded in terms of time when the activity was undertaken, location, time spend, as well as the work outputs.
- **Prevention structures and activities have been refocused.** During 2022 we have also reviewed our prevention offering to make it affordable and sustainable in the future. We have now made some changes to our prevention activities and restructured the team. The changes will allow us to continue with much of the work that we already undertake, but we have stopped youth intervention programmes that are no longer financially viable. These changes have resulted in costs savings of £500k per year from April 2023. We continue to play an active role in a very significant range and number of prevention partnerships.
- **Demand management and charging.** We have restructured to create a greater focus and better understanding of demand and what we might do to reduce unnecessary call outs. For example, we have significantly strengthened our policy on when we respond to commercial automatic fire alarms. Last year, this has saved us £56,875 in cash payments for avoidable turn outs by on-call firefighters and £119,600 in non-cashable, time savings for firefighters working on the wholetime duty system to enable them to do more prevention, fire safety and training activities. In addition to this, we have refreshed our charging policy for some special services, adding an additional layer of operational and financial challenge to non-life-threatening rescues and incidents.
- **Dynamic operational coverage tool.** We are investing in technology to support decisions on the disposition of operational resources. A NFSP wide dynamic coverage tool, based in our service control centre will be used by crewing support officers to provide live risk information to inform decisions around the movement of resources during significant incidents or spate conditions. These types of incidents often include multiple resources resulting in depleted emergency cover in areas of the Service, the dynamic coverage tool will enable officers to ensure an acceptable disposition of resources to maintain a response aligned to our response standards. The efficiency and effectiveness of this technology is further enhanced through

incorporating the whole NFSP, making cost savings in the running of the tool and basing decisions on the availability of resources across the NFSP.

MAXIMISING OUR PARTNERSHIP OPPORTUNITIES.

- **Prevention is achieved through strong partnerships** including safe and well; road safety; arson reduction programmes. These programmes are examined in terms of costs and cashable, non-cashable and societal savings. A VFM tool helps to ensure that the basis of this assessment is well understood and able to be benchmarked over time. Collaboration register and centralised record of partnership agreements are in place with managerial oversight. Partnership funding is used to support many of these programmes, and we have secured over £1m of sponsorship since 2017.
- **Protection involves close collaboration** including working jointly with other enforcement agencies. The Service works closely with other fire and rescue services and public and private sector partners to achieve its objectives of keeping the public safe and reducing the number of fires in commercial buildings. In addition, there have been a number of changes to the Service's response to automatic fire alarms that have yielded considerable cashable and non-cashable savings for the Service as outlined above.
- **Response is broader than fire and rescues** including working with other blue light services in such activities as medical co-responding and collapsed behind closed doors. We have an agreement with the South Western Ambulance Service to recover all of our costs associated with co-responding. In addition to this, and as previously outlined, we have refreshed our charging policy for some special services. Again, our VFM tool is used to understand and report the internal and external savings arising from our response activities.
- **Networked Fire Services Partnership (NFSP) gives us borderless mobilisation.** Our partnership with Devon and Somerset FRS and Hampshire and the Isle of Wight FRS is a long-standing one. The partnership has a Strategic Plan, Board and substructures that are jointly funded by all three Services. Through the NFSP, we are able to use the latest mobilising technology to dispatch and manage resources for operational incidents, whilst at the same time deliver considerable annual savings. Through its strategic board the partnership is now working on a range of initiatives to further improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the joint mobilising arrangements, and as a consequence of this joint approach, savings, and productivity improvements to us. The partnership has saved us around £2m by investing in a single and jointly procured command and control system.
- **One public estate and sharing our property strengthens our partnerships.** Since our combination we have undertaken a fundamental review of our estate. We did this for two principal reasons. Firstly, we wanted to ensure that we have a comprehensive, prioritised and value for money led approach to our future maintenance programme. Secondly, we wanted to further identify and open up opportunities for sharing our estate with the police, local authorities, health, and other partners. We now have 25 of our 60 buildings are shared with our partners, with a number of these arrangements generating an income stream for us.

STREAMLINING OUR ON-CALL FIREFIGHTER RECRUITMENT.

- **On-call recruitment and retention are a key focus.** As the third largest employer of on-call firefighters, who operate out of 47 of our 50 stations, we have significant focus on on-call firefighter recruitment and retention. We have streamlined the recruitment

processes for on-call firefighters and provided additional support for on-call stations with targeting managerial support, recruitment, and training. Recruitment events are targeted on the general working populations and underrepresented groups. This is supported by high levels of community engagement. We now have slightly more joiners than leavers although on-call firefighters are not staying as long as they might have done in the past. This is a national issue. A key focus for us to ensure that we maintain and improve availability whilst we maximise retention and contract efficiency. We are driving this at a local level and are vice-chairing the NFCC workstream.

TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT

- **Training and workforce planning are savings us money.** Our annual Training Plan enables us to use our training resources efficiently, therefore through good planning based on firm assumptions we know how many internal courses to run and control the targeting of external courses that are requested. In addition, staff are trained in accordance with the risks on their station ground as opposed to training everyone in everything.
- **Technology is being fully embraced.** We have embraced technology that has enabled us to realise more efficient ways of working. We now have virtual incident command development and assessments software and vans going to the station rather than the inefficiencies of firefighters travelling to assessment centres. We use of body cams assessment evidence to support and in some case reduce the need for command assessments. Training now occurs via a comprehensive approach to e-learning and a large number of our leadership programmes are delivered via MS Teams significantly reducing costs and travel time.

ESTATE MANAGEMENT

- **Maintenance is aligned to sound investment need.** The 2022-23 programme includes the outcomes of independently undertaken property conditions survey, identifying the property assets in most need of attention now and over the next few years, based on risk and priority, and reflects a seven-year refresh cycle. We do not have, and cannot afford, any property replacement programme.
- **Property is regularly reviewed.** Particularly since Covid and the acceleration of greater levels of home working, we have reviewed the need for some of our buildings. We have moved out of a rented property saving £25k pa and as part of our investment in operational training we are seeking to move out of a leased facility with the MoD, saving us around £250k pa (see below). We have on-going feasibility work associated with the relocation of our fire control to make more centralised. Provided funds can be found, this will release a capital receipt and allow a key station to be up graded. Our fire station in Amesbury will be up graded as part of improving fire cover in the south east Wiltshire area by making it a day-crewed station with an on-call section.
- **Redevelopment of our operational training centres is being delivered.** We are currently in the process of redeveloping our live fire training facility at Devizes and re-locating our training facilities at West Moors to Weymouth. This investment will create modern and fit-for-purpose facilities that will provide a carbonaceous live fire, multi storey training facility that offers a comprehensive fire, rescue, and road traffic accident training environment. The training opportunities that this will offer our firefighters will range from initial acquisition to ongoing skills refresh and development to meet the National Operational Guidance requirements and future-proof our training delivery programme. This £8m investment is being funded from a ring-fenced reserve

helping to avoid the need for further capital borrowing charges. This investment will largely exhaust any flexibility within our financial reserves.

- **Environmental improvements reduce our carbon and save us money.** We are investing in solar panels at five key fire stations to both reduce carbon emissions but also to improve our operational resilience should there be a national power outage as outlined in the national risk register. We are also planning to put solar panels on Swindon fire station this year. We have installed smart meters to help to reduce our carbon footprint and also to deliver financial savings. Another development is a programme of replacement of fluorescent and halogen lighting with LED lighting on fire stations, improving quality of lighting and reducing energy usage. This, coupled with the improvements to heating, window and door installations, re-roofing, and fitting of insulation across the portfolio, has made our building stock more energy-efficient and provided more comfortable spaces for our colleagues to work in. Separately these are all relatively limited gains, but together they add up to notable improvement in the efficiency of our buildings. We are contracting consultants to support us to deliver a decarbonisation plan to help us to better invest across the estate to reduce our carbon footprint.

ICT AND INFORMATION MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS

- **Fit for purpose infrastructure ICT central to our strategy.** As a Category 1 responder we need to ensure that our ICT infrastructure is responsive, secure, and reliable to ensure that the Service's critical functions can be maintained, and that loss of productivity through business continuity failures is avoided. We continue to invest in our ICT to ensure that it is fit for purpose, carefully balancing the use of server and cloud-based services. We have made significant financial and technical investments and have achieved Cyber Essentials and the Emergency Services Network (ESN) code of connection. We are also working to the principles of ISO 27001 which helps organisations manage and protect their information assets so that they remain safe and secure.
- **Smarter working gives us flexibility and saves us money.** There is an extensive programme of smarter working across the Service allowing staff to work from any location at any time. This helps to improve work-life balance for our staff thereby reducing costs associated with unwanted staff turnover. It also allows us to make considerable savings on fuel and mileage allowances and unnecessary travel time yielding both cashable and non-cashable savings and reducing our carbon footprint.
- **Responsive information reduces costs and increases speed and safety.** The Service has an extensive arrange of information management systems that support efficient and responsive decision-making. The overwhelming majority of our information systems are now electronic with many 'talking to one another' and reducing unnecessary administrators. Through our Digital Transformation Programme, all in-house systems are being migrated across from legacy systems to a common Office 365 platform to further increase the interconnectivity of information and reduce unnecessary bureaucracy and costs. Aligned to this, we are also seeking to put in place arrangements that enable us to strengthen collaboration and information sharing with our key partners.

FLEET AND EQUIPMENT

- **Vehicles are regularly reviewed against need and policy.** There has been a significant investment over the past few years that saw the replacement of 25 appliances, six off road appliances and three technical rescue vehicles. Over the following five years there is provision to replace a further twenty-two large fire

appliances, four 4x4 fire appliances and a specialist off-road vehicle. The requirements for specialist and general vehicles are all reviewed by senior officers before being approved. Each project looks at the best way of providing the required functions, and covers consideration of vehicles, equipment, technology, and crewing requirements.

- **White, non-operational fleet has been reviewed.** All our non-operational fleet has been significantly reviewed. This has resulted in a significant reduction of cars and vans saving capital and revenue costs. We have extended the lifecycle of our replacement programme and as part of our commitment to reduced carbon and environmental management we are trialling a number of electric cars and vans.
- **Technology is helping us.** We have installed CCTV in all our fire engines and several response vehicles. This has resulted in a number of benefits, including a reduction in our avoidable accident incidents. We are in the process of determining the best way forward with installing telematics in the majority of our vehicles. This will help us collate details of how vehicles are being used and when it is identified that a vehicle is not being used as efficiently as expected. The data will also help us further improve our understanding and management of our CO₂ emission levels for vehicle related travel.
- **Our approach to asset management remains strong.** We are currently in the final stages of achieving ISO 55001 (asset management). This helps ensure that we have a systematic and cost effective approach to our fleet, equipment, PPE, and estate. This standard supports our existing compliance with ISO 45001 (health and safety) where we are one of only three fire and rescue services in England to have achieved this Service-wide accreditation. Our electronic asset management systems are being replaced with a new system to ensure that all assets are routinely checked and that any defects are reported early to help minimise safety risks and avoidable costs.

4. KEY MESSAGES

We have below average costs and below average fire precept.

We found over £8.5m of annual cashable savings since being formed in 2016 and March 2022.

The Service is rated by His Majesty's Inspectorate as 'Outstanding' for Efficiency and 'Good' for Effectiveness and 'Good' for People.

There are significant strategic financial challenges still facing us.

Financial resilience is now a key issue for us.

Reserves will be exhausted over the next 2-3 years as we must invest in our operational training centres.

Significant deficits are forecasted.

Further cuts to frontline services will be needed if income is not increased.

A further year of fire-precept flexibility in 2024-25 will put us on a sound financial footing over the medium term.