



Staffordshire Police, Fire and Crime Panel

14:00 Monday 24 October 2022
Council Chamber, County Buildings, Stafford

John Tradewell
Secretary to the Panel
Friday 14 October 2022

NB. The meeting will be webcast live which can be viewed here -
<https://staffordshire.public-i.tv/core/portal/home>

A G E N D A

1. **Apologies**
2. **Declarations of interest**
3. **Minutes of the meeting held on 26 September 2022** (Pages 1 - 8)
4. **Questions to the PFCC from Members of the Public**

Questions to the Commissioner are invited from members of the public who live or work in Staffordshire. Notice of questions must be received by no later than three clear working days before the Panel meeting. More information on where and how to submit a question can be found at <https://bit.ly/34arVDw>
5. **Decisions published by the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner (PFCC)**
6. **Medium Term Financial Strategy - update - Police** (Pages 9 - 22)
7. **Medium Term Financial Strategy - update - Fire and Rescue Service** (Pages 23 - 34)
8. **Fire and Rescue - Annual Assurance Statement 2021/22** (Pages 35 - 62)
9. **Questions to the PFCC by Panel Members**
10. **Dates of Future Meetings and Work Programme** (Pages 63 - 64)

| Membership | |
|--------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Jackie Barnes | Stoke City Council |
| Adrian Bowen | Co-optee |
| Richard Cox (Vice-Chair) | Lichfield District Council |
| Ann Edgeller | Stafford Borough Council |
| Gill Heesom | Newcastle-under-Lyme District Council |
| Tony Holmes | Staffs Moorlands District Council |
| Philip Hudson | East Staffordshire Borough Council |
| Bryan Jones | Cannock Chase District Council |
| Roger Lees | South Staffordshire District Council |
| Bernard Peters (Chair) | Staffordshire County Council |
| Martin Summers | Tamworth Borough Council |
| Keith Walker | Co-optee |

Note for Members of the Press and Public

Filming of Meetings

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Recording by Press and Public

Recording (including by the use of social media) by the Press and Public is permitted from the public seating area provided it does not, in the opinion of the chairman, disrupt the meeting.

Contact Officer: Mandy Pattinson,
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Minutes of the Staffordshire Police, Fire and Crime Panel Meeting held on 26 September 2022

Present: Bernard Peters (Chair)

| | |
|--------------------------|--------------|
| Jackie Barnes | Tony Holmes |
| Richard Cox (Vice-Chair) | Bryan Jones |
| Ann Edgeller | Roger Lees |
| Gill Heesom | Keith Walker |

Also in attendance: Ben Adams, Helen Fisher, Louise Clayton and David Greensmith.

Apologies: Adrian Bowen, Philip Hudson and Martin Summers

PART ONE

11. Declarations of interest

None were made at the meeting.

12. Minutes of the meeting held on 27 June 2022

Resolved – That the minutes of the Panel meeting held on 27 June 2022 be approved and signed by the Chairman.

13. Questions to the PFCC from Members of the Public

The Panel considered the questions ask by a member of the public and the Commissioners written response.

Ms Mallender attended the meeting to ask the questions and the Commissioner confirmed his response as written in the report.

With the consent of the Chairman, Ms Mallender was allowed to ask a supplementary question which was “when was Policing going to improve in the local area?”

The Commissioner responded that it was difficult sometimes to achieve the right balance and satisfy the hopes of the community. Contact would continue with the community and the Police would remain fully engaged. The Commissioner agreed to meet with the local community at a suitable forum.

Resolved: That the questions asked and the Commissioners response be noted.

14. Decisions published by the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner (PFCC)

Details were submitted of decisions published by the Commissioner since the last Panel meeting.

- Decision 002 Public confidence surveys
- Decision 003 – Crest Support to LCJB performance framework: year 3
- Decision Note – Armed Police Training Facility Decision

The Panel were reminded that there would be an informal meeting to discuss the armed police training facility in November.

Resolved – That the decisions be noted.

15. Police and Crime Plan Update

The Police and Crime update report was presented by the Commissioner who explained the progress made against his strategic priorities. He reminded Members that detailed performance management and action against targets was also considered at his public Performance meetings held with the Chief Constable. [Public Meetings - Staffordshire Commissioner \(staffordshire-pfcc.gov.uk\)](http://staffordshire-pfcc.gov.uk) The next was due to be held on 4 October and members were invited to attend or watch on the webcast.

As a result of the Commissioners presentation and questions from the Panel, the following information was gained. This was in addition to that provided in the written report:

- Regarding the new Local Policing Model; early indications showed that it had provided extra capacity to respond to and investigate crime and support victims. It was reported that officers felt that local knowledge was now being used more effectively.
- Extra investment in the Contact Centre included training more people to deal with calls. It was hoped that this would help to reduce response times. It was felt that the performance of the Contact Centre remained a priority.
- The training of recruits was key to improvement. However, it was found that as people become fully trained they were moving on to become Police Officers. Whilst this was welcomed, it did affect contact centre performance.
- Local and responsive services were responding to calls at the same pace, despite a 20% increase in calls both locally and nationally against pre covid levels.
- Members felt that better communication with the public was needed, particularly around expected contact or response times.
- £750,00 extra funding for Safer streets projects had been received for Stoke on Trent, Stafford, Newcastle and Burton areas. The detail on how it could be used would be available soon.

- The Illegal trespass protocol was a partnership approach and involved developing a policy which was then subject to consultation. This inevitably took time but this was progressing.
- Public 'Bleed Kits' were a response to knife crime. There was a desire to expand this initiative and possibly attract government funding.
- There was a perception that Anti Social Behaviour (ASB) was increasing. The Commissioner informed the Panel that ASB was actually reducing in Staffordshire overall, but it had increased in certain localised areas and on Public Open Space, but less so in Communities. Again, this was an area of shared responsibility but when hot spots and causes had been identified, this could be addressed quite quickly.
- With regard to the inspection report, the Panel recognised that the Chief Constable had recently been appointed and had inherited the failings identified in the service. The action plan to address the issues was being monitored by the Commissioner.
- The Panel were concerned that whilst the Inspection report had raised a number of areas which needed improvement, these were areas which had been highlighted as areas of concern in the past and little improvement could be demonstrated. The Commissioner felt that there were a number of key themes which ran through the report which needed to be picked up, such as communication; capacity; leadership; and use of technology. There had been a number of new officers over recent years and this was an opportunity to change culture; make improvement; and take ownership of the problems.

The Commissioner was thanked for his update report. The Panel remained concerned that the issues raised in the HMICFRS Inspection report needed to be addressed and that the public should be able to access the information and gain reassurance that issues were being tackled. Whilst it was acknowledged that performance against improvements would be measured and made public through the Performance meetings held with the Chief Constable, the Panel asked the Commissioner to attend a special meeting of the Panel to discuss in more detail. The Chairman reminded members that the County Councils Safeguarding Overview and Scrutiny (O&S) Committee covered Community Safety issues. He felt that to enable transparency and avoid duplication, it would be appropriate to invite the Safeguarding O&S Committee members to the Panel meeting to take part in the discussion.

Resolved-

- a) That the update report be noted.
- b) That the Commissioner be invited to a further meeting of the Panel to discuss the recent HMICFRS Inspection report.
- c) That the Safeguarding Overview and Scrutiny Committee be invited to take part in the meeting.

16. Fire and Rescue Service - Safety Plan 2020-2024 Update

The Fire and Rescue Service Safety Plan update report was presented by the Commissioner who explained the progress made against his strategic priorities.

It was acknowledged that since the last meeting of the Panel a HMICFRS Inspection report had been published which had rated the service overall as 'good' but had highlighted a number of areas which needed some improvement. Work had started on this and Members were again reminded that detailed performance management and action against targets was considered at the Commissioners public Performance meetings held with the Chief Fire Officer. [Public Meetings - Staffordshire Commissioner \(staffordshire-pfcc.gov.uk\)](https://www.staffordshire-pfcc.gov.uk) The next was due to be held on 20 October and members were invited to attend or watch on the webcast. The Commissioner felt confident that the new leadership and change in culture would lead to improvements in the areas highlighted as needing attention.

Members asked for confirmation that should industrial action take place, the Fire and Rescue service would be sufficiently staffed to manage any emergency's. It was confirmed that any action would be after bonfire night and discussions were taking place with other services to try to continue with emergency cover over the strike period. Following a suggestion by a Panel member, the use of volunteers or retired officers would be considered.

Options around a number of operational sites which had previously been agreed to relocate, were being reconsidered and a number of opportunities were being explored for example relocating other services to share sites.

Following the recent house fire in Lichfield, where a number of fire engines had been pulled-in from neighbouring towns, it was confirmed that the service balanced risk and prioritised responses to ensure that resources were normally in the right place when needed.

Resolved – That the report be noted.

17. Staffordshire Safer Roads Partnership

The Deputy Commissioner introduced the report which provided an update on the Safer Roads Partnership and its current priorities and activity. It was noted that the Police were a partner and that the Commissioner and/or Deputy chaired the Board meetings.

Following the presentation of the report and the subsequent Panel questions, the following information was gained. This was in addition to that provided in the written report:

- The report contained the Partnerships objectives. Under each priority would be a set of targets which would be measured and reported to the Board.
- Some targets were beyond the partnerships control for example; heart attacks whilst driving were unavoidable, as opposed to Drug driving which could be influence by media awareness, police stops etc.
- Designated parks which could be used to teach children road safety were a good idea but space was not always available. Schools used a number of other resources and safe areas.
- Sources of data was improving but was limited at the moment (2020). Data was collected to respond to government bodies but the 2021/22 was not yet formalised. This information would be available for the Police Performance meeting on 4 October.
- Drug driving figures were higher than drink driving. The Deputy Commissioner would raise with the partnership to see if there were opportunities to train or increase support after conviction to stop repeat offending.
- Off road bikes were a problem in some areas. This would be raised at the partnership meeting but members were encouraged to report incidents to local police.

Resolved – That the report be noted.

18. Questions to the PFCC by Panel Members

No further questions were asked on this occasion.

19. Dates of Future Meetings and Work Programme

The Panel were requested to consider moving the Police Misconduct and complaints regulation 2020 – annual report from the October meeting to the February meeting. This was in order to provide a complete calendar years data rather than 9 months of one year and 3 months of the previous years.

Resolved – That the Police Misconduct and complaints regulation 2020 – annual report be moved to February 2023.

Chairman

STAFFORDSHIRE POLICE FIRE AND CRIME PANEL

ACTIONS ARISING FROM PREVIOUS MEETINGS

NOTE: The following action or information was requested at a previous meeting(s). When an item has been completed it will be taken off the list.

| Meeting / Agenda Item | Action Required | By Whom | Information requested/action taken | Completed or Target date |
|--|--|------------------------|---|---------------------------------|
| 25 Sept. Police and Crime Plan update Page 7 | a) That the Commissioner be invited to a further meeting of the Panel to discuss the recent HMICFRS Inspection report. b) That the Safeguarding Overview and Scrutiny Committee be invited to take part in the meeting. | Panel/ Commissioner | To be confirmed | |



Report to the Police Fire and Crime Panel –24th October 2022

Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS)

Current MTFS Update

Report of the Staffordshire Commissioner

Introduction

The purpose of this report is to update the Police, Fire and Crime Panel on the Current Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS). This supports delivery of one of the Commissioner's key responsibilities under the Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011.

The report sets out the following:

- Update to current year's budget
- Update to future years' MTFS assumptions
- Sensitivity analysis around key financial items
- Update on capital programme

Ben Adams
Staffordshire Commissioner

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Executive Summary

- 1.1 This report provides an update to the Police, Fire and Crime Panel on the current MTFS covering the years 2022/23 to 2025/26 including an update on the fiscal landscape facing policing since the MTFS was approved.
- 1.2 Since the Police, Fire and Crime Panel considered the 2022/23 MTFS on the 31st January 2022, both Staffordshire and the United Kingdom have seen the full lifting of Covid-19 restrictions. Whilst this is welcome, the longer-term impact on the organisation is only now starting to crystallise whether this be through permanent funding changes, through commissioned services or through demand placed on policing. There is also a significant impact on wider public partners including the NHS, councils and the wider criminal justice system all of which will set the scene for the upcoming 2023/24 refresh.
- 1.3 Since the MTFS was set Staffordshire Police has been placed into an 'engaged' phase of monitoring by His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary, Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) based on their inspection that commenced in 2021. This will necessitate investment into the policing model and panel will be updated in full on these investments in the full budget report in due course.
- 1.4 Police officer recruitment is forecast to over deliver against the Uplift target of reaching 1940.5fte officers by March 2023. Staffordshire Police is only one of three Forces nationally rated as Green by the Home Office Uplift programme for delivery by year end. Whilst there are operational challenges from bringing in a significant number of new officers around training, development and experience it should not be lost that this provides the core building block for transforming the Force over the coming years and the service delivered to local communities.
- 1.5 A new Local Policing operating model went live in June 2022. As part of this, Policing in Staffordshire has been moved closer to local communities with improvements seen in response times being on average 25% quicker than before. The full financial impact of the change in operating model will be reflected in the updated MTFS.
- 1.6 The external financial environment has changed significantly since the panel considered the budget in January 2022. Inflation is higher than forecast, in particular around energy costs, pay awards have been above budgeted assumptions, and borrowing rates are significantly higher than forecast.
- 1.7 Whilst inflation and pay awards have tracked higher than forecast, the government has committed, at the time of writing, to continuing with the current three-year spending review of which 2023/24 will be year 2. Whilst this is welcome from a planning perspective it does mean there will be no additional funding for local services to cover the impact of higher inflation unless government chooses to reallocate departmental spending priorities within their overall funding envelope.
- 1.8 Despite the overall inflationary pressures, the in-year budget has been managed robustly and offsetting savings and income have been found to manage within the in-year budget without relying on reserves. This prudent in year management by the Commissioner provides the strongest position possible to meet the upcoming financial challenges.

1.9 The table below shows the forecast movement in the MTFS position since the MTFS was set in January 2022:

| | 2022/23 £m | 2023/24 £m | 2024/25 £m | 2025/26 £m |
|--|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|
| Underlying position | (1.3) | 0.3 | 1.5 | 2.1 |
| <i>Reserve movements</i> | 1.3 | (0.3) | (1.5) | (2.1) |
| Reported budget gap January 2022 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| <i>Reverse assumed use of reserves</i> | 0 | 0.3 | 1.5 | 2.1 |
| <i>Remove council tax deficit spreading estimate</i> | 0 | (0.2) | 0 | 0 |
| <i>Pay award pressures (all)</i> | 1.0 | 3.1 | 3.1 | 3.1 |
| <i>Pay award grant (officers)</i> | (1.0) | (2.1) | (2.1) | (2.1) |
| <i>LGPS triennial revaluation pressure</i> | 0 | 1.6 | 1.6 | 1.6 |
| <i>Gas, electric & fuel pressures</i> | 1.7 | 1.7 | 1.7 | 1.7 |
| <i>General non-pay inflation</i> | 0.6 | 0.6 | 0.8 | 0.9 |
| <i>Operating model investment</i> | 0.1 | 0.1 | 0.1 | 0.1 |
| <i>New savings identified *see para 1.19</i> | (0.6) | (0.7) | (0.7) | (0.7) |
| <i>One-off savings/additional income</i> | (2.4) | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| <i>Additional Investment Income</i> | (0.3) | (0.4) | (0.4) | (0.4) |
| Revised Position Gap/(Underspend) | (0.9) | 4.0 | 5.6 | 6.3 |

1.10 The table below shows the changes in assumptions based on the MTFS set in January 2022, compared to the changes assumed in the table above:

| Category | | 2022/23 % | 2023/24 % | 2024/25 % | 2025/26 % |
|---|---------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| Pay award | MTFS | 4.00 | 2.50 | 2.00 | 2.00 |
| | Revised | 5.00 | 4.00 | 2.00 | 2.00 |
| LGPS triennial revaluation *average | MTFS | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 |
| | Revised | 0.00 | 2.30* | 0.00 | 0.00 |
| Gas, electric & fuel *average | MTFS | 10.00 | 2.50 | 2.00 | 2.00 |
| | Revised | 62.00* | 62.00* | 2.00 | 2.00 |
| General non-pay inflation | MTFS | 4.00 | 2.50 | 2.00 | 2.00 |
| | Revised | 9.00 | 4.00 | 2.00 | 2.00 |

- 1.11 The majority of the increase in gap has been driven by factors outside of the Commissioner's control, namely around a higher inflationary environment. The panel will be aware the inflation assumptions used in the MTFs were those contained within the budget set by the previous Chancellor of the Exchequer in October 2021.
- 1.12 Whilst the pay award was higher than budgeted, due to the Commissioner's prudent budget assumptions for 2022/23 this pressure has been offset in-year by the pay award grant. This is in stark contrast to the majority of other local areas which have seen significant in-year pressure from this pay award.
- 1.13 Projecting forward, inflation assumptions will be more challenging over the coming MTFs period than historically has been the case. This heightened risk underpins the Commissioner's approach to maintaining a general fund reserve with a minimum balance of 3% of the net revenue budget.
- 1.14 As part of the budget process for 2023/24 the MTFs will be updated as further information becomes available and assumptions become more certain, up until the confirmation of the budget proposal by the Commissioner (and endorsement of the precept for Fire by the Police, Fire and Crime Panel), on 06 February 2023. For indicative purposes, pay and non-pay inflation have been revised upwards to 4%; this is reflected in the figures above.
- 1.15 Police staff received a pay award of 2.1% from April 2022. Since this, the officer pay award was announced at £1,900 at all ranks. The working assumption in the figures modelled above are that this will also be agreed for police staff.
- 1.16 The level of employer contributions into the LGPS is reassessed every three years as part of the actuarial valuation of the fund. The updated position includes an additional pressure arising from this valuation totalling circa £1.6m. This represents an increase in the primary employer contribution from 15.5% to 21.5% and a removal of the secondary contribution.
- 1.17 The Commissioner had indicated, for planning purposes, increases in precept of 2.99% for the years 2023/24 onwards. This is assumed in the position shown above; without this, the gap would increase by c.£897k for each 1% not levied. The spending review has awarded the flexibility on the precept of £10 per annum, which is an increase of approximately 4.02% for Staffordshire. The Commissioner will balance the needs of policing for additional funding against the ability of Staffordshire residents to afford the policing precept.
- 1.18 The 2022/23 MTFs assumed a use of reserves in years 2023/24 to 2025/26. For planning purposes, these have been reversed in presenting the position outlined above. The funding remains available to be used and is earmarked in the budget support reserve.
- 1.19 Additional new permanent savings identified to date and reflected in the table above are a renegotiation of the facilities management contract (£170k), insurance (£320k), business rates reviews (£120k). Work continues to in relation to identifying further savings opportunities to close the budget gap.
- 1.20 To aid the planning process the following strategic guidelines have been set out within which planning will be undertaken:
- That the current police officer baseline is as a minimum maintained at 1,940.5fte

- Precept increases over the life of the MTFs (measured from the Commissioner's first precepting decision in January 2022) will be below the rate of inflation delivering a real terms reduction in the policing precept
- Back office support services will reduce as a share of the overall budget over the life of the MTFs ensuring more funding is directed to front line service delivery
- The capital programme will be funded from internal borrowing only over the MTFs, in light of the current increased PWLB rates, except to manage short term cashflow
- Reserves will be maintained, where possible, to support the ability to internally borrow and provide stability
- Savings will first be sought from increased efficiency, income generation or non-pay spend across both the Commissioner's Office and Staffordshire Police
- A commitment to avoid 'cost shunting' between local partners

1.21 A high-level timetable is included in this report, to lay out the necessary steps and key meetings to communicate the 2023/24 budgeting process and updated the MTFs.

National and Local Update

- 2.1 The Group (Commissioner and Staffordshire Police) outturn forecast for the current year at the end of Period 5 is £232.038m. This is a positive variance of £0.912m (0.39%) against the annual net revenue budget of £233.074m.
- 2.2 A three-year spending review was set out alongside the Chancellor's budget announcements on the 27th October 2021. The 2023/24 MTFs will be the second year of this period. The new Chancellor has confirmed that overall departmental spending envelopes will remain, with no additional offset for inflation or higher pay awards. This will see a return to real terms reductions in public expenditure.
- 2.3 In his fiscal event on the 23rd October 2022, the Chancellor committed to reverse the previous increase in employee and employer National Insurance contributions from November 2022. The removal of this will result in a saving of c.£1.2m per annum it is assumed at this stage that this will not be removed from core grant for 2023/24. If this reduction is reflected in the core grant, this will result in an increase to the gap presented.
- 2.4 Precept flexibility of an increase of £10 per annum is approximately a 4.02% increase for Staffordshire. The current MTFs assumes 2.99% increases each year and a growth in the tax base of 1.25% in 2023/24 and 1.5% thereafter. At this stage there are no indications from billing authorities to change these assumptions.
- 2.5 The Home Office has committed to reviewing the funding formula for the allocation of core policing grant. A previous review was abandoned in 2017 following consultation with the sector. It is unknown how Staffordshire could be impacted; however, this review will be undertaken against the backdrop of the 'levelling up' agenda as well as some marked performance deviations between Forces over the last decade with Staffordshire's performance being relatively strong over that period.
- 2.6 Both the Commissioner and Staffordshire Police are currently reviewing current planned savings, revenue budget pressures, proposed priority investments and capital spend. This

work has been undertaken over the months of September and October and has identified the following high-level revenue budget changes:

- Higher inflation than budgeted for. Currently the MTFS assumes a 2.5% inflation rate in 23/24 and 2% thereafter in line with expectation in the October 2021 budget. With the Consumer Prices Index (CPI) running at 9.9% in the 12 months to the end of August. This, combined with a number of contracts tied to the higher Retail Prices Index (RPI) mean inflation is likely to be considerably above the amount budgeted for in the existing MTFS. Inflation predictions in future years are increasingly difficult to rely upon due to market volatility,
- The higher rates of inflation will also necessitate a review of the capital programme given well publicised increases in construction costs and government borrowing costs. Therefore, it is proposed to limit capital spend over the MTFS period, for planning purposes, to the available internal cash to fund these to avoid external borrowing,
- There remains some uncertainty regarding the level of pay award in future years. The current MTFS assumes 2.5% in 2023/24 then 2% thereafter in line with the October 2021 budget inflation assumption. Given the high inflationary environment, a higher pay award for 2023/24 of 4% has been incorporated into the position presented in this MTFS update.
- The ongoing impact of Covid on calls for service has necessitated an investment in resource within the contact centre. To support the public and to meet this increased demand in relation to contacting Staffordshire Police headcount was increased in the Force control room by 15. Unfortunately pressures on other public sector partners is resulting in increasing non-police demand being placed on policing as the service of last resort in areas such as mental health crisis, lost and missing and highways.
- The Force continues to make significant investment in IT provision both to fix a number of legacy issues but also to technologically enable the Force given the changing nature of crime. The Commissioner has delivered a position of having 53 major outages in the year before his tenure started, to having none since November 2021 underpinning the success of this investment.
- Additional new permanent savings identified to date are a renegotiation of the facilities management contract (£170k), insurance (£320k), business rates reviews (£120k). these will be incorporated into the 2023/24 MTFS and are reflected in the table above.
- The commitment to a new firearms facility following the commissioners review, reducing the capital budget estimate at this point in time by c.£3m.

2.7 In addition to the above, panel should note that whilst the uplift in police officer numbers mandated by central government is welcome, in essence this 'ring fences' well over half the budget from efficiency savings and redesigns. This means that in relation to savings on employment costs these can only come from police staff and PCSO roles.

2.8 Whilst the government has stated that the increase in grant funding is intended to support additional costs in relation to this, there may still be a requirement to fund some of this

increase locally through precept flexibility and/or savings. There is currently no additional funding for pay awards and incremental growth for these new officers from central government.

The Budget Setting Process and Savings/Pressure Review

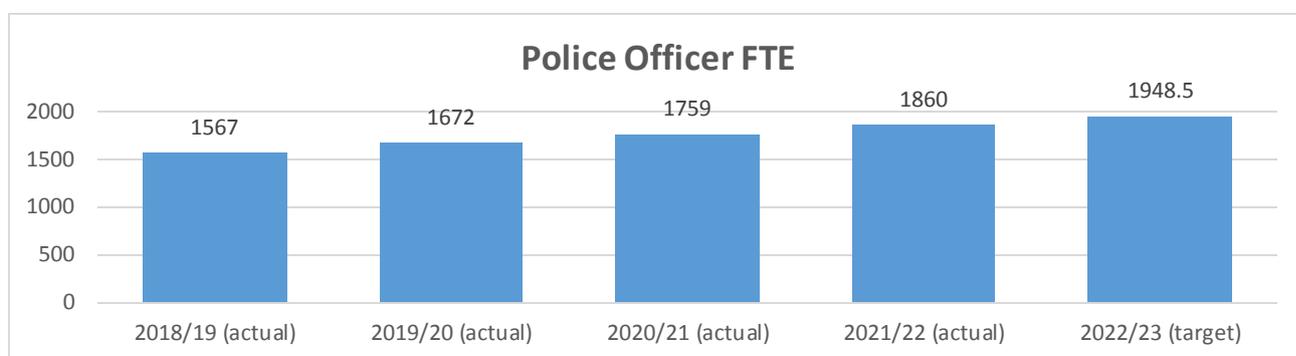
- 3.1 Financial and budget planning work is undertaken jointly with the Chief Constable to detail pressures, potential savings as well as identifying areas for potential new investment in the policing model, should funding be available to do so.
- 3.2 The table below outlines the proposed budget timetable for the 2023/24 MTFS:

| Date | Activity |
|-----------------------------------|---|
| August 2022 | Review capital programme commences |
| September 2022 | Directorate review of current MTFS |
| September 2022 | TOM v budget reconciliation and recalculation of pay budgets |
| September 2022 | Review inflation assumptions |
| September 2022 | Review reserves position |
| 14 th October 2022 | Deadline for submission of new pressures/savings/investments |
| 24 th October 2022 | Police Fire & Crime Panel – MTFS Update |
| w/c 31 st October 2022 | Resource Allocation Challenge panels (to present the pressures and flag any risks – this should be linked to FMS) |
| November 2022 | Presentation of draft budget requirement |
| w/c 5 th December 2022 | Resource Allocation Challenge panels (purpose being to determine areas of priority for review for next year) |
| December 2022 | Refine detailed budgets |
| December 2022 | Finalise capital programme |
| December 2022 | Funding settlement |
| January 2023 | Public Consultation regarding precept |
| January 2023 | Draft Panel report |
| 6 th February 2023 | Police Fire & Crime Panel – Recommendation of the budget and precept decision |

- 3.3 The review of the current MTFS highlighted that 94% of current year savings have been delivered or will be delivered by year end. Savings totalling £65k are currently thought to be unachievable and this will be accounted for in the MTFS refresh.
- 3.4 A review of the capital programme is currently underway, with this currently showing a reduction in forecast capital spend over the life of the MTFS period. This is welcome in light of higher inflation and higher borrowing costs.
- 3.5 As part of the above process, Staffordshire Police will hold budget holder 'Resource Allocation and Challenge panels. These sessions, led by the Chief Constable, will challenge command leads around areas for new savings derived from the use of HMICFRS and CIPFA benchmarking where levels of funding and outcomes do not align. It is proposed to roll out the same process to spend within the Commissioners Office for the 2023/24 MTFS process.
- 3.6 The draft funding settlement from the Home Office is anticipated in December. Panel will note that the forecast increase in cash funding from the Home Office is currently 3% between 2022/23 and 2023/24. The government has committed that it will not reopen the spending review to either reduce funding or to increase funding for higher than anticipated inflation.
- 3.7 However, this additional 3% of central funding has to support both the baseline increase of 120 Police Officers and any inflationary pressures. As such this represents a real terms cut in core funding with inflation running at c.10% and pay awards at 5%.

Police Officer Numbers

- 4.1 Staffordshire Police has continued to see an increase in officer numbers in 2022/23 as a result of the Government's investment in police numbers. This is in addition to the investments made by the Commissioner in previous years.
- 4.2 The current MTFS sets out plans to recruit 120 of these additional Officers in 2022/23 and this is on track for delivery.
- 4.3 The uplift in officer numbers will continue to be maintained over the life of the MTFS. Further detail is awaited from central government as to how this will be monitored, funded and the subsequent performance measures on which local areas will be held accountable.
- 4.4 The graph below shows the cumulative increase of Officer numbers since 2018/19 (including investment by the Commissioner and the Home Office Uplift programme).



- 4.5 Panel will note that the 2022/23 target is 8 above that previously reported at 1,948.5fte (instead of 1,940.5fte). This is due to additional funding being allocated in year for Forces in a position to over recruit against the 20,000 national target. Staffordshire have secured one off funding for the additional 8fte totalling £160k. No ongoing funding will be allocated to maintain this ergo any continuation of this will be a local decision.
- 4.6 Police officer recruitment is forecast to over deliver against the Uplift target of reaching 1940.5fte officers by March 2023. Staffordshire Police is only one of three Force nationally rated as Green by the Home Office Uplift programme for delivery by year end. Whilst there are operational challenges from bringing in a significant number of new officers around training, development and experience it should not be lost that this provides the core building block for transforming the Force over the coming years and the service delivered to local communities.
- 4.7 An increase in officer numbers has resulted in increased capital spend on items such as vehicles. This has been funded in year from the revenue Uplift grant, however longer term may present a challenge when the renewal cycle starts in the later years of the MTFS as a higher capital need is required to sufficiently support the welcome higher headcount.
- 4.8 To support this known pressure, and the wider Uplift programme, there is an earmarked reserve which is seen as sufficient over the life of the MTFS.

Income Assumptions

- 5.1 The Commissioner receives funding from a number of sources with the majority of this being through core Home Office funding and the Council Tax precept. Income assumptions are currently being reviewed as part of the MTFS process; the Police funding settlement is usually received in December.
- 5.2 A three-year spending review was set out alongside the Chancellor’s budget announcements on the 27th October 2021; the 2023/24 MTFS will be the second year of this period. The new Chancellor has confirmed that overall departmental spending envelopes will remain with no additional offset for inflation or higher pay awards. This will see a return to real terms reductions in public expenditure.
- 5.3 As such inflationary pressures on existing business and investment in service enhancements may need to be funded through increases in precept, savings or additional income being sourced.
- 5.4 The Commissioner had indicated, for planning purposes, increases in precept of 2.99% for the years 2023/24 onwards. The spending review indicated precept flexibility of £10 per annum which is approximately 4.02%, the Commissioner will balance the needs of policing for additional funding against the ability of Staffordshire residents to afford the policing precept, especially in the context of the cost of living crisis.
- 5.5 An unknown is the medium-term impact of the pandemic as well as the cost of living crisis on our council tax base. The rebound in the base forecast by billing authorities was stronger than they indicated when setting the budget for 2022/23 and initial indications were that there may be an increase in council tax base growth above that originally anticipated. The impact of the cost of living crisis is currently unknown.
- 5.6 Other grants such as legacy Council Tax support and Pensions Grant are assumed to continue at the current levels and are not increased by inflation representing a real terms cut.

Assumptions

- 6.1 The MTFS refresh is being undertaken in a more uncertain environment as a result of the cost of living crisis.
- 6.2 Funding assumptions both in relation to local and national funding are likely to cause material changes late on in the planning process. This cannot be avoided but needs to be recognised.
- 6.3 The table below sets out the budget assumptions presented to the panel for the 2022/23 MTFS:

| Description | 2022/23 Budget | 2023/24 Estimate | 2024/25 Estimate | 2025/26 Estimate |
|---------------------------|----------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|
| Police Officers Pay Award | 4.0% | 2.5% | 2.0% | 2.0% |

| | | | | |
|------------------------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| Incremental uplift | 0.0% | 1.0% | 1.0% | 1.0% |
| Pension Contribution | 31.0% | 31.0% | 31.0% | 31.0% |
| <u>Police Staff</u> | | | | |
| Pay Award | 4.0% | 2.5% | 2.0% | 2.0% |
| Incremental uplift | 0.0% | 1.0% | 1.0% | 1.0% |
| Pension Contribution | 15.5% | 15.5% | 15.5% | 15.5% |
| <u>Non-Staff Inflation</u> | | | | |
| General (Including Rates) | 4.0% | 2.5% | 2.0% | 2.0% |
| Utilities - Gas/Electric | 10.0% | 2.5% | 2.0% | 2.0% |
| Fuel | 10.0% | 2.5% | 2.0% | 2.0% |
| Insurances | 30.0% | 2.5% | 2.0% | 2.0% |
| <u>Funding</u> | | | | |
| Government Funding | 5.5% | 3.0% | 1.5% | 2.2% |
| Council Tax Base Increase | 1.83% | 1.25% | 1.50% | 1.50% |
| Variable Income Charges | 2.0% | 2.0% | 2.0% | 2.0% |
| Council Tax Precept Increase | 4.19% | 2.99% | 2.99% | 2.99% |

- 6.4 Non-pay inflation is currently running at 10%, which is significantly higher than the 4% assumed in the MTFS for 2022/23. The war in Ukraine has exacerbated global inflation trends and continues to have an impact on gas and food prices, largely due to the disruption to supplies. Electricity and gas are the largest contributors to the higher CPI inflation rates, followed by petrol and diesel, then food and non-alcoholic drinks.
- 6.5 The non-pay inflation assumption for 2023/24 is 2.5%; current estimates indicate that inflation will remain at high levels, not falling back to the 2% target until Q4 2023. For planning purposes, the assumption reflected in this MTFS update is an increase to 4%.
- 6.6 The current MTFS assumes pay awards at 2.5% per annum for 2023/24. For planning purposes, the assumption reflected in this MTFS update is an increase to 4% in line with non-pay inflation.
- 6.7 For indicative purposes, the table below from the 2022/23 MTFS highlights the impact of changes to the MTFS position:

| Cost Area | Change | £'000 |
|-----------------------------|--------|-------|
| Police Pay | 1% | 1,119 |
| PCSO/Police Staff | 1% | 683 |
| Utilities | 1% | 47 |
| Vehicle costs | 1% | 36 |
| Supplies & Services | 1% | 99 |
| Police Pension Contribution | 1% | 1,119 |
| Police Core Grant Funding | 1% | 1,294 |
| Precept | £1 | 88 |
| Council Tax Base | 1% | 883 |

Sensitivity Analysis

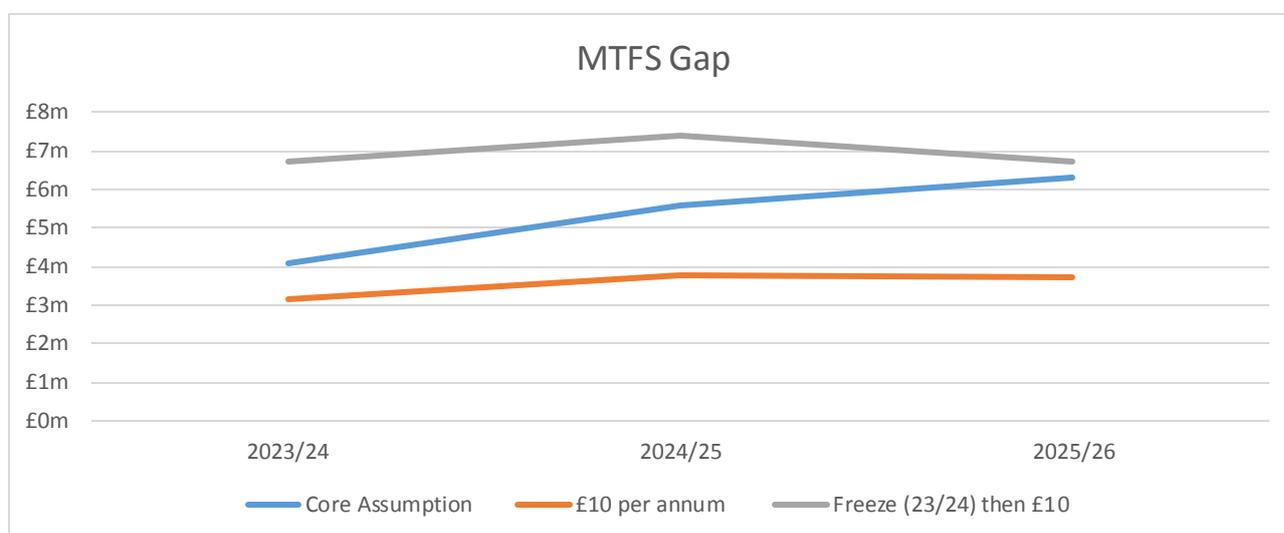
- 7.1 As part of the current MTFS refresh, sensitivity analysis has been produced around the level of precept.
- 7.2 Currently there is no indication from the government that the current precept referendum limit, of £10 per annum for the life of the spending review, will be changed.

7.3 The MTFS currently assumes a 2.99% inflation increase per annum. Over the life of the current MTFS this resulted in a real terms reduction in the precept compared to both inflation and wages. The table below is extracted from the January 2022 MTFS report:

| | 2022/23 | 2023/24 | 2024/25 | 2025/26 | Cumulative |
|-------------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------------|
| RPI Inflation | 5.0% | 3.4% | 2.8% | 2.8% | 14.0% |
| Wage Growth | 4.6% | 3.7% | 2.2% | 3.0% | 13.5% |
| Precept Estimates | 4.19% | 2.99% | 2.99% | 2.99% | 13.16% |

7.4 Clearly within the current higher inflation environment the gap between precept increases and wage/RPI inflation will be larger than shown above.

7.5 The graph below shows three precept scenarios. All assume that government funding is as per the 2022/23 MTFS estimates and inflation as per the assumption in section 6 of this report.



7.6 The scenarios are as follows:

Core Assumption – 2.99% per annum as per current MTFS (Blue Line)

£10 Per Annum – maximum allowed before referendum (Orange Line)

Freeze in 2023/24 and then £10 Per Annum – (Grey Line)

7.7 With the above scenarios these are the gap per annum and not cumulative gap. Ergo, any closure of the gap at this stage requires ongoing savings or in extremis the use of reserves as a one off.

Capital

8.1 As part of the current MTFS refresh, capital plans across both Staffordshire Police and the Commissioner’s Office are being refreshed.

8.2 The Commissioner has set a desire to see greater economy and efficiency being obtained from infrastructure investment. This includes the benefits arising from such investment both

in terms of productivity gain but also cashable savings. This will be a key theme for the Commissioner in agreeing the 2023/24 capital programme.

- 8.3 The Commissioner will repay £2.5m of loans funded by the Public Works Loans Board (PWLB) in the 2022/23 year. No new loans will be taken out in year with the capital programme funded from a mix of revenue contributions, capital receipts and internal borrowing. By not replacing these loans the Commissioner will continue to make savings on interest payments.
- 8.4 External debt, held in the form of Public Works Loans Board (PWLB) debt has decreased for three years in a row. With the above £2.5m repayment this is forecast to fall for a fourth year in a row this year.
- 8.5 The planning assumption is that the capital programme will be funded from internal borrowing only over the MTFS, in light of the current increased PWLB rates, except to manage short term cashflow.
- 8.6 In contrast to recent years, the external environment in relation to investment income now represents an opportunity for additional investment income. At its September meeting, the Bank of England base rate was increased to 2.25% with investment returns now at or above this benchmark.
- 8.7 Two significant programmes included in the MTFS are for the Emergency Services Network (ESN) and Staffordshire Police's preferred option on Firearms provision.
- Within the current MTFS, provision had already been made for the ESN programme based on the ESN model generated by the Home Office last year. Since then Commissioners and Forces have been notified of an anticipated slippage in the programme. The MTFS will be updated as further information is received as to the new timeframe but this will, in the short term, reduce capital expenditure.
 - The preferred option for Firearms Range provision has been approved by the commissioner. Compared to the current MTFS this will reduce capital expenditure subject to detailed costings.
- 8.8 The in-year capital programme has been reviewed in light of high inflation and issues around supply chains. This has resulted in both reprofiling and also some targeted removals from the programme.
- 8.9 Within the MTFS there are anticipated borrowing costs built in. By utilising internal borrowing over the life of the MTFS it is proposed that a new saving, compared to the current plan, can be achieved.
- 8.10 The current interest rate environment does not support locking in long term borrowing, given PWLB rates are running at over 5%. Whilst there is no immediate need to borrow in the current year by adopting a stance of only borrowing internally, the Commissioner will be strongly placed to either avoid these high borrowing costs, or to seek to borrow when market conditions allow over the life of the MTFS.
- 8.11 In addition to the above, the current internal cash balances are earning a significantly higher rate of return than budgeted. In the immediate coming year this will, based on current rates,

earn c.£400k of new investment income to offset some of the inflationary pressures the group is facing.

Reserves

- 9.1 The General Fund reserve remains at £8.509m, which is 3.65% of the net revenue budget in line with the Commissioner's Reserves Strategy, with no forecast draw on this reserve in year anticipated.
- 9.2 Earmarked reserves are held for specific purposes. As part of the MTFS refresh process both Section 151 Officers will review the adequacy and intended use of these reserves with a view to providing support to the MTFS.
- 9.3 A budget support reserve has been established with funding of £3.064m. In the current MTFS this is drawn on to support the budget over the medium term so is unavailable to further close the budget gap but may be reprofiled accordingly.
- 9.4 Reserves overall, when benchmarked against the wider sector, remain in line.
- 9.5 Reserves, whilst set aside for a particular purpose, currently are utilised in cash terms to support capital spend in lieu of external borrowing. This internal borrowing, if replaced by PWLB through not being available, would result in a cost of £1.500m per annum.



Item No. on Agenda

Report to the Police Fire and Crime Panel – 24 October 2022

Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS)

Current MTFS Update (Fire)

Report of the Staffordshire Commissioner

Introduction

The purpose of this report is to update the Police, Fire and Crime Panel on the Current Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS). This supports delivery of one of the Commissioner's key responsibilities under the Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011.

The report sets out the following:

- Update to current year's budget
- Update to future years' MTFS assumptions
- Sensitivity analysis around key financial items
- Transformation Update
- Update on capital programme

Recommendations

The Police, Fire and Crime Panel is asked to note the information contained within this updated MTFS report

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1.0 Executive Summary

- 1.1 This report provides an update to the Police, Fire and Crime Panel on the current MTFS covering the years 2022/23 to 2026/27 including an update on the fiscal landscape facing the Fire and Rescue Service, current year financial performance, and the recent mini-budget announcements made by the new Chancellor Kwasi Kwarteng and finally the impact of rising inflation on pay and direct costs.
- 1.2 The MTFS for the five-year period 2022/23 to 2026/27 was approved by the Staffordshire Commissioner following presentation to the Police, Fire and Crime Panel on 14 February 2022. The approved MTFS included an estimate gap in funding of £2.0m by 2024/25.
- 1.3 This MTFS report provides an update on the estimated savings required beyond 2022/23 and reviews a number of the upward pressures increasing the level of future funding gap, mainly driven by pay pressure and increasing costs due to the escalating levels of inflation. These factors are outside of the control of the Authority.
- 1.4 The Staffordshire Commissioner is committed to ensuring that the Service continues to develop its transformation plan in order to meet the new financial and operational challenges with value for money being a key priority. A number of transformation options have been presented to the Commissioner at the Strategic Governance Board and are now being progressed. This report provides an update on these transformation workstreams as requested by the Panel.
- 1.5 The Panel should note that the Settlement Funding received by the Authority for 2022/23 included an inflationary increase in Revenue Support Grant (RSG) set at 3.1% (+£146k) as part of a three-year settlement. The new Chancellor has confirmed that department spending envelopes will remain, with no additional offset for increasing costs.
- 1.6 Following the budget and precept presentation to the Panel in February, the Commissioner approved a 1.99% increase in Council Tax equivalent to an additional £1.57 per annum in line with this referendum limit and increased Band D Council Tax for the Staffordshire Commissioner FRA to £80.35.
- 1.7 As part of the budget process for 2023/24 the MTFS will be updated as further information becomes available and assumptions become more certain, up until the confirmation of the budget proposal by the Commissioner (and endorsement of the precept for Fire by the Police, Fire and Crime Panel), on 13 February 2023.
- 1.8 Pressure on funding continues into the medium term as uncertainty also remains around assumptions for pay, pensions and increasing prices (RPI). The MTFS assumptions around pay and pensions remain under review but this update assumes higher than budgeted pay awards for both operational and support staff.
- 1.9 The local government pay award for support staff has been agreed by members of Unison. The Fire Brigade Union have rejected the 2% pay offer made by employers in July 2022 and is now considering a revised offer by the employers of 5%. Pay awards are therefore significantly above budgeted levels in year.
- 1.10 A high-level timetable is included in this report, to lay out the necessary steps and key meetings to communicate the 2023/24 budgeting process and updated MTFS.

2.0 The Budget Process

- 2.1 The 2023/24 budget process for Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Service has now commenced. As undertaken in previous years the budget will be built using a zero-base approach with full consultation being undertaken with budget holders and representative bodies.
- 2.2 All budget holders are required to attend a budget challenge session which reviews budget proposals for 2023/24 and also seeks to find efficiencies and mitigation for the current year cost pressures. A Principal Officer will be in attendance, alongside Finance, for all major budget challenge meetings to ensure that an appropriate and proportionate level of scrutiny has been consistently applied.
- 2.3 The headline timetable for the 2023/24 budget process is shown below:

| <u>Budget Timetable</u> | <u>Task</u> |
|--------------------------------|---|
| 10 October 2022 | Budget Preparation commenced |
| 17 October for 6 weeks | Budget holder consultation |
| 13 October and 12 December | Capital Review Group Meetings |
| 30 November – 3 December 2022 | Draft pay and non-pay budget ready for review process |
| December 2022 – January 2023 | Budget Consultation and budget presentations to the Strategic Governance Board (23/01/23) and Service Management Board (09/01/23) |
| 18 January 2023 | ETAP (Finance Panel Meeting) |
| 31 January 2023 | Business Rates Budget Finalised (NNDR1) |
| 13 February 2023 | Police, Fire and Crime Panel- Precept setting and Budget 2023/24 / MTFS report / capital and treasury management strategy reports |
| 17 February 2023 | All precept notices issued following Commissioner approval |

3.0 Background and updated Financial Position 2022/23

- 3.1 The total revenue budget was approved by the Staffordshire Commissioner for 2022/23 at £42.472m, following presentation to the Panel in February 2022.
- 3.2 Settlement Funding for the Authority comprises of three funding streams shown below. The Revenue Support Grant (RSG) and Business Rates top-up are shown below as per the Local Government Finance Settlement issued for 2022/23, with the 1% share of local business rates based upon the Final NNDR1 submissions from the nine local billing authorities.
- 3.3 The Settlement Funding for 2022/23 was made up of three separate areas:

| | 2022/23 £m |
|----------------------------------|---------------|
| 1% share of Local Business Rates | 2.670 |
| Business Rates Top-up | 6.059 |
| Revenue Support Grant (RSG) | 4.923 |
| Total Settlement Funding | 13.652 |

- 3.4 In addition to the above Council Tax is collected by the nine billing authorities in Staffordshire and Stoke on Trent. The current band D Council Tax is set at £80.35 (£1.54 per week) for the Staffordshire Commissioner Fire and Rescue Authority, resulting in collection of **£28.532m** for 2022/23 based upon a collection tax base of 355,100 properties and a collection surplus of **£0.288m**.
- 3.5 A three-year spending review was set out alongside the Chancellor's budget announcements on the 27th October 2021. The 2023/24 MTFS will be the second year of this period. The new Chancellor has confirmed that overall departmental spending envelopes will remain, with no additional offset for inflation or higher pay awards. This will see a return to real terms reductions in public expenditure.
- 3.6 The latest monthly financial position for the Staffordshire Commissioner Fire and Rescue Authority's reported an actual revenue spend of £18.8m as at 31st August (Period 5) being broadly in line with budget. This position included an underspend on pay across Wholetime, On-call and Support staff. In terms of Wholetime both overtime and crewing deficiency costs are at much reduced levels compared to last year. There are also a number of vacancies within support staff driving a saving for the year to date.

Wholetime overtime costs are also at a reduced level due to the benefit of the recently approved minimum crewing of 4 for wholetime appliance mobilisation. Lower overtime costs as part of the crewing change are considered in more detail within the transformation section of this report.

Non-pay costs are currently slightly worse than budget and includes higher costs being incurred on a number of key areas due to significant inflationary pressure e.g. for higher fuel and supplies and services costs. Income and finance costs are marginally behind budget due to the timing of receipts. The forecast for the unitary charge (UC) also reflects the increase in the variable cost element of the UC following the increase in RPIx.

- 3.7 The outlook for the year-end financial position remains in line with budget, but this position includes estimates increases for pay and non-pay costs and factors in delivery of savings for identified areas.
- 3.8 The risk and opportunities identified for the current year 2022/23 are reported below. The volatility of costs being experienced across all sectors is generating concerns about the financial position in year and of course the impact upon the MTFS. Whilst costs and savings at the moment are broadly equal in year this position is likely to change quickly and will be under close scrutiny to ensure all costs pressures and savings are accurately reported and updated.



4.0 MTFS Assumptions

- 4.1 The Commissioner receives funding from a number of sources as included above with the majority of this being received through Grant Funding and the Council Tax Precept. Income assumptions are currently being reviewed as part of the MTFS process ahead of the funding settlement usually received in late December.
- 4.2 The economic impact of COVID remains a concern on council tax and business rates collection in year as well as the impact on the future council tax base and its growth, this position remains under review with the nine billing authorities with assumptions remaining in line with the approved MTFS.

4.3 The current MTFS incorporates the following assumptions:

| | 2022/23 | 2023/24 | 2024/25 | 2025/26 | 2026/27 |
|---|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| | Plan | Plan | Plan | Plan | Plan |
| <u>PAY COSTS</u> | | | | | |
| Pay Award Operational Staff | 3.0% | 3.0% | 3.0% | 2.0% | 2.0% |
| Pay Award Non Operational Staff | 3.0% | 3.0% | 3.0% | 2.0% | 2.0% |
| Other Pay Costs | 3.0% | 3.0% | 3.0% | 3.0% | 2.0% |
| Pension Costs - Fire Fighters Pension Schemes | +£1.8m | +£1.8m | +£1.8m | +£1.8m | +£1.8m |
| Pension Costs - Fire Fighters Pension Grant | (£1.7m) | (£1.7m) | (£1.7m) | (£1.7m) | (£1.7m) |
| <u>NON PAY COSTS</u> | | | | | |
| Electricity | 30.0% | 5.0% | 5.0% | 5.0% | 5.0% |
| Gas | 30.0% | 5.0% | 5.0% | 5.0% | 5.0% |
| Business Rates | 2.0% | 2.0% | 2.0% | 2.0% | 2.0% |
| Water and Sewerage | 2.0% | 2.0% | 2.0% | 2.0% | 2.0% |
| General Supplies and Services | 2.0% | 2.0% | 2.0% | 2.0% | 2.0% |
| <u>INTEREST RATES</u> | | | | | |
| Interest on Investments | 0.1% | 0.3% | 0.5% | 0.5% | 0.5% |
| Interest on Debt | 4.4% | 4.3% | 4.2% | 4.2% | 4.2% |
| <u>GENERAL FUNDING</u> | | | | | |
| Council Tax Increases | 1.99% | 1.99% | 1.99% | 1.99% | 1.99% |
| Council Tax Base Growth | 1.83% | 1.25% | 1.50% | 1.50% | 1.50% |
| Revenue Support Grant | 0.0% | 2.0% | 2.0% | 2.0% | 2.0% |
| Local Business Rates | (28.5%) | 15.0% | 5.0% | 2.0% | 2.0% |
| Business rates Top-up grant | 0.0% | 0.0% | 0.0% | 0.0% | 0.0% |

4.4 The following pressures on the MTFS have been identified and are reviewed in more detail below:

i) **Pay Costs for 2022/23 and into the Medium Term**

The budget included a 3% increase for both Operational and Support Staff. Pay negotiations for all staff groups are undertaken nationally on behalf of the employers by the National Joint Council for Local Government Services under a national framework.

On 25 July 2022 the National Employers agreed to make a one-year final offer to the unions representing the main local government NJC workforce with effect from 1 April 2022. This offer included an increase of £1,925 on all NJC pay points plus an additional one day in annual leave entitlement. This offer if accepted based upon the number of support staff within the Service is equivalent to an increase above 5% and results in a pay pressure of £0.2m per annum. On 27 September members of Unison agreed to accept this offer by a majority 63.5% to 36.5%. In order for the pay deal to be finalised so that it can be implemented and paid to employees, GMB and / or Unite must also vote to accept the employers' offer.

On 19 July 2022 the Executive Council of the Fire Brigades Union (FBU) informed the national employers (NJC) that their 2% pay proposal had been rejected by firefighters. The Executive Council have expressed their anger not to have received any improved proposal from the Employers side. The FBU have stated that they remain committed to negotiate a fair pay settlement to achieve pay justice for all firefighters irrespective of workplace, duty system or role/rank. To this end they urged the national employers to make a revised and improved proposal which is not an insult to their members.

On 4 October 2022, a revised offer of 5% was made by the NJC on behalf of the employers and this is now being considered by the FBU. All pay offers on behalf of the employers have been made without any additional funding commitment from central government and therefore increases the future funding gap as shown in table 4.5 below.

The necessary work to prepare for a ballot for national strike action is taking place by the FBU with industrial action likely to take place in November 2022, should this revised offer not be accepted. The Service is reviewing contingency arrangements and business continuity plans should strike action take place by members of the FBU.

This MTFs update assumes that this latest pay award offer of 5% for operational staff is agreed (as it has been agreed for Police Officers) but considers the sensitivity of a higher than 5% award.

ii) Non-Pay Costs and Inflation impact

Fuel costs are showing an increase as at the end of July, although pump prices are now reducing as the price of oil return to levels at the start of the year at c.\$95 a barrel (peak \$128). Utility increases are being evaluated as more data becomes available but there will be additional pressures moving into quarter 3 and the impact of support measures announced by the government for businesses is fully understood.

The two PFI contracts have variable and fixed elements built to the contracts, with the viable element increasing by RPIx (February measure). For 2022/23 this increase amounts to 8.3% and has increased costs in year by £0.3m, with a further £0.3m now likely for 2023/24 based upon the ongoing increase in this measure of inflation. This is a significant pressure on the MTFs. The latest RPI figures suggest that the headline measure could increase further by the end of the year but this rate has yet to be adjusted for the cap on gas and electricity price increases.

iii) Airwave Grant

The Home Office have announced that this grant of £0.23m will be removed completely over the next 5 years and is a pressure for the MTFs as there will be no income mitigation from central government.

4.5 The table below shows the estimated impact of major assumptions based upon the current reporting position and the budget statement made by the Chancellor.

| | 2022/23 | 2023/24 | 2024/25 | 2025/26 | 2026/27 |
|--|---------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| | Budget | Plan | Plan | Plan | Plan |
| Current MTFS Gap | (0.3) | (01.2) | (02.0) | (02.0) | (02.0) |
| <u>Material changes in Assumptions</u> | | | | | |
| Pay Award for Support Staff (Agreed) - 2022/23 | (0.2) | (0.2) | (0.2) | (0.2) | (0.2) |
| Pay Award for Operational Staff (Estimated 5% for 2022/23) | (0.3) | (0.5) | (0.5) | (0.5) | (0.5) |
| Pay Award for 2023/24 (increase by 1% to 4%) | | (0.2) | (0.3) | (0.3) | (0.3) |
| Impact of savings achieved in 2022/23 | 0.50 | 0.30 | 0.30 | 0.30 | 0.30 |
| Estimated Impact of Transformational Savings implemented | 0.30 | 0.40 | 0.40 | 0.40 | 0.40 |
| Investment returns | 0.15 | 0.20 | 0.20 | 0.20 | 0.20 |
| Inflationary Pressure - Unitary Charge | (0.3) | (0.6) | (0.6) | (0.6) | (0.6) |
| Inflationary Pressure - Fuel and Utilities | (0.2) | (0.3) | (0.3) | (0.3) | (0.3) |
| Impact of removal of Airwave Grant | | (0.1) | (0.1) | (0.2) | (0.2) |
| Revised Estimated Gap | (0.3) | (02.2) | (03.1) | (03.2) | (03.2) |
| +/- Previous Gap | | (1.0) | (1.1) | (1.2) | (1.2) |

4.6 The table below shows the changes in assumptions based upon the MTFS set in February 2022, compared to the changes assumed in the table above:

| Category | | 2022/23 | 2023/24 | 2024/25 | 2025/26 | 2026/27 |
|--------------------------------|-----------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| | | Budget | Plan | Plan | Plan | Plan |
| Pay award | MTFS | 3.0% | 3.0% | 3.0% | 2.0% | 2.0% |
| | Revised | 5.0% | 4.0% | 3.0% | 2.0% | 2.0% |
| Gas, Electric Fuel *average | MTFS | 30.0% | 5.0% | 5.0% | 5.0% | 5.0% |
| | Revised * | 60.0% | 30.0% | 5.0% | 5.0% | 5.0% |
| General non-pay inflation | MTFS | 2.0% | 2.0% | 2.0% | 2.0% | 2.0% |
| | Revised | 9.0% | 4.0% | 2.0% | 2.0% | 2.0% |
| Unitary Charge for PFI | MTFS | 2.0% | 2.0% | 2.0% | 2.0% | 2.0% |
| | Revised | 8.3% | 8.0% | 2.0% | 2.0% | 2.0% |

5.0 Sensitivity Analysis

- 5.1 The MTFS refresh is being undertaken in a continuing uncertain environment and this should be noted by the Panel.
- 5.2 Funding assumptions both in relation to local and national funding are likely to cause material changes late on in the planning process, something that cannot be avoided but needs to be recognised. Funding assumptions for precept and Settlement Funding Assessment have remained unchanged.
- 5.3 The following sensitivity analysis is based upon the approved MTFS paper from February 2022:

| Cost Area | Change | £000s |
|---------------------------------|--------|-------|
| Pay Costs | +/- 1% | 260 |
| Premises Costs (incl utilities) | +/- 1% | 30 |
| Vehicles | +/- 1% | 10 |
| Supplies and Services | +/- 1% | 70 |
| Employer Pension Contributions | +/- 1% | 210 |
| Business Rates | +/- 1% | 30 |
| Revenue Support Grant | +/- 1% | 50 |
| Precept | +/- 1% | 287 |
| Council Tax Base | +/- 1% | 305 |

6.0 Service Transformation

- 6.1 The requirement for Service Transformation is to ensure that Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Service “is able to provide a modern, efficient and sustainable level of service to the public which does not compromise the safety of our staff or our communities.”
- 6.2 The approved MTFS included a funding gap estimated at c.£2m and was supported by the Service Transformation programme endorsed by the Commissioner. Further work in this area will now be urgently required based upon the inflationary pressures created into the medium term as the use of earmarked reserves is only ever considered as a short-term option but will be required in 2023/24 based upon this revised shortfall position now forecast at £3.2m (see paragraph 4.5 above).
- 6.3 There are a number of topics that are actively being worked upon which all connect under the banner of future transformation of the service. The work is aligned to the Safety Plan 2020-2024 (*service reform*) and the Commissioners Fire Plan 2021-2024 under the two priorities of having a *Flexible and Responsive Service* as well as a *Fire Service for Tomorrow*. The work fits into four distinct categories:
1. Corporate Reform
 2. Response and Crewing Reform
 3. Prevention and Protection Reform
 4. Estates and Shared Services Reform

Corporate Reform

The following areas are the key focus of this workstream:

➤ **Senior leadership restructure**

In order to create a more efficient, flexible pathway of management and to attract the best future leaders into the service. The corporate restructure was a key theme of the Transformation Board and it is now complete. The re-structure has provided a cost-efficient management model which will ensure that the Service is well placed to meet the challenges of the future whilst delivering an excellent level of service to our communities. The key changes have seen a removal of an Assistant Chief Fire Officer Post and two Group Managers whilst three Area Managers have been introduced into the Service.

- **Investing in our people** – This work is being completed through our review of the service's culture and creation of an insights team to improve equality, inclusivity and diversity
- **Improving the productivity of the Service** – Through a new station work routine to create capacity and performance clarity within the wholetime crews. This also includes investment and reform of all aspects of performance and assurance within the service. This work is ongoing.
- **Review of Learning and Development** - This area of work includes a more effective restructure to build capacity for outreach training and assessments.

Response and Crewing Reform

In order to ensure the most effective use of our resources the following are key areas of focus:

➤ **To introduce new appliances with enhanced rescue capabilities (ERPs)**

This will improve the services capabilities for heavy rescue incidents. This will improve the services capabilities for heavy rescue incidents and allow a more efficient crewing model to be implemented at Longton which will create significant cost savings. This work is also supported by capital programme investment for the procurement of 2 new appliances with this additional capability.

➤ **A revised operational response model**

In order to create a more effective and efficient use of available wholetime and on-call firefighters to improve fire cover and enhance the level of public safety. Work has now been completed to move to a new response model which is more aligned with the majority of other FRS's which means that minimum levels of crewing has now been accepted as four. The optimum crewing figure is still five but an accepted safe minimum of four is permitted which will reduce overtime requirements and improve fire cover and thus the level of service to the public.

➤ **Reviewing the viability of station locations**

This workstream has been developed and work is ongoing.

➤ **Reviewing of the crewing models in place across the Service**

This workstream has been developed and work is ongoing.

➤ **Review of Service standby policy**

To provide evidence to demonstrate whether our standby movements add value to our response to incidents

Prevention and Protection Reform

- This reform is aimed at creating more responsive and efficient prevention teams and aiming to improve the level of collaborations on agenda such as health outcomes and community safety. In terms of protection, continued investment is being made in our dedicated teams and the upskilling of our operational staff will ensure a greater level of capacity is achieved in order to deliver more protection work within our communities.

Estates and Shared Services Reform

- **The transformation of fire estate** – This includes the continued progress of sharing estates with Staffordshire Police which improves collaboration and brings a more efficient model to Fire and Police as part of the Commissioner’s Estate Strategy. Shared location opportunities at Stone, Uttoxeter, Kidsgrove and Chase Terrace/Burntwood are currently being evaluated.
- **Review of Shared Service performance** – this will explore the level of performance and assurance for both the Service and Staffs Police with a review of current governance and reporting arrangements

7.0 Capital

- 7.1 As part of the current MTFS refresh and budget build for 2023/24 capital plans across Staffordshire Fire are being refreshed. This work is undertaken through the Capital Review Group that is chaired by the Director of Finance.
- 7.2 The capital programme for 2022/23 was approved at £8.0m including £4.4m of carry-over from 2021/22 which further increased at year end.
- 7.3 The proposals for Stafford Fire Station will no longer go ahead as planned due to a significant escalation of costs for this project. Further feasibility work for this site is now ongoing with the estates team.
- 7.4 The work scheduled for Abbots Bromley (minor refurbishment) is ongoing and should be completed in November 2022.
- 7.5 A full capital programme update and Capital Strategy will be presented to the Panel in February as part of the budget and MTFS papers.

8.0 Reserves and Balances

- 8.1 The Authority holds two reserves, an Earmarked Reserve which is build up through any surplus within the Income and Expenditure account. The utilisation of this fund has been established with the approved Reserves Strategy; and a General Reserve which is held to protect against any emergency conditions that may arise.
- 8.2 The Commissioner currently holds £1.9m in General Reserves and a risk assessment for this reserve was undertaken as part of the budget setting process for 2022/23 and the overall provision of £1.9m has remained unchanged for a number of years and represents 4.5% of the proposed revenue budget for the year.
- 8.3 At 1 April 2022 the Authority held £8.3m in Specific/Earmarked Reserves. This reserve is supported by the approved Reserves Strategy which will be updated for the new budget year. This reserve increased slightly at year end due to slippage in the capital programme for 2021/22.
- 8.4 The amount of earmarked reserves required to support the budget setting process for 2023/24 and timing of future transformation savings will be reviewed as part of the updated reserves strategy report and MTFS update. The utilisation of additional levels of earmarked reserves will be required to support the budget for 2023/24 based upon the upward pressures identified within this report.
- 8.5 Reserves, whilst set aside for a particular purpose, currently are utilised in cash terms to support capital spend in lieu of external borrowing. This internal borrowing, if replaced by PWLB through not being available, would result in a cost of £0.4m per annum based upon latest increases in borrowing rates from the Public Works Loan Board.



Fire and Rescue Strategic Governance Board

Statement of Assurance 2021-22

Purpose:

The purpose of this paper is to provide members of the Strategic Governance Board (the Board) with an overview of the draft Statement of Assurance 2021-22 prior to its publication.

Summary:

Members of the Board are requested to consider the contents of the draft Statement of Assurance accompanying this report as set against national guidance.

As detailed within the Fire and Rescue National Framework for England 2012 (updated May 2018) (the Framework), the Staffordshire Commissioner Fire and Rescue Authority (the Authority) must satisfy the following requirement:

“Fire and rescue authorities must provide assurance on financial, governance and operational matters and show how they have had due regard to the expectations set out in their integrated risk management plan and the requirements included in the Framework. To provide assurance, fire and rescue authorities must publish an annual statement of assurance.”

It should be noted that this Statement of Assurance covers the period 1 April 2021 to 31 March 2022.

Please note that the draft Statement of Assurance was received and considered at Service Management Board on 11th October 2022. A small number of amendments to the document were requested and the Communications team are making the necessary changes. Should the updated draft not be available in time for this Board due to the tight turn-around to allow the design elements to be changed we would ask the Board to take into account the following:

- On Welcome – we will acknowledge the name change of Her Majesty’s Inspectorate to His Majesty’s Inspectorate following the Queen’s demise and ensure that the references throughout the doc. reflect this.
- The photos in the draft will be reviewed with a view to including some more diverse images, which better reflect our Service/Communities.
- The Financial Challenge infographic on page 37 will be removed in its entirety as it refers to 2022/23 and just serves to confuse.
- On page 36 under Financial Overview amend both the references in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure bullet from 2020/21 to 2021/22 and similarly Balance Sheet setting out financial position as at 31 March 2022 rather than 2021.

- On page 39 – infographic – Finance - 'actual spend £40.9m and £1.1m saved' to be deleted. Text to read 'Budget set at £42m Capital spend £0.4m.
- Page 39 - Human Resources – HR to provide bullets regarding sickness and absence for the period.

The figures reported are calculated using the most up to date information available. As a result, these performance figures may differ slightly from those reported in previous statements due to the subsequent outcomes from fire investigations, Coroner's reports and other external factors, and may be subject to change.

Recommendations:

That the Board:

- accept the content and context of the draft Statement of Assurance; and
- sign off the draft Statement of Assurance as suitable for publication. Publication will coincide with the sign-off and publication of the Service's Annual Statement of Accounts for the period 1st April 2021 to 31st March 2022 as referred to in the Statement of Assurance.

Introduction and background:

The Framework states that:

'Fire and rescue authorities must provide annual assurance on financial, governance and operational matters and show how they have had due regard to the expectations set out in their integrated risk management plan and the requirements included in the Framework. To provide assurance, fire and rescue authorities must publish an Annual Statement of Assurance'

Fire and rescue authorities are accountable for their performance and should be open to evaluation by the communities they serve. Information on their performance should be accessible, robust, fit-for-purpose and accurately report on effectiveness and value for money.

One of the principal aims of a statement of assurance is to provide an accessible way in which communities, Government, Local Authorities and other partners may make a valid assessment of their local fire and rescue authority's performance.

The Statement of Assurance will be used as a source of information on which to base the Secretary of State's biennial report under section 25 of the *Fire and Rescue Act 2004*.

Fire and rescue authorities should assess their performance across a number of key areas. The areas to be included for assessment, and the methodology used, are a matter for local determination, although authorities will need to satisfy themselves that the measures and methods used are appropriate and fit for purpose.

An elected member of the relevant authority who is able to take responsibility for its contents should sign off the Statement of Assurance. It is up to the individual authority to ensure that this is done by an appropriate person (or persons) on behalf of the Authority.

Statements of Assurance should be published annually by fire and rescue authorities. It is for fire and rescue authorities to decide when they should publish depending on individual reporting arrangements.

Fire and rescue authorities are responsible for ensuring that their business is conducted in accordance with the law and proper standards, and that public money is properly accounted for and used economically, efficiently and effectively.

It is a statutory requirement under the *Accounts and Audit (England) Regulations 2015* for authorities to publish the financial results of their activities for the year. This 'Statement of Accounts', shows the annual costs of providing the service and is determined by a Code of Practice which aims to give a "true and fair" view of the financial position and transactions of the authority. The Statement of Assurance may briefly set out what assessment procedures are in place with regard to the authorities' statements of account.

The *Accounts and Audit (England) Regulations 2015* also require authorities to prepare an annual governance statement in support of this statement of accounts. This governance statement is an expression of the measures taken by the authority to ensure appropriate business practice, high standards of conduct and sound governance. The Statement of Assurance may set out what work authorities have undertaken to review the effectiveness of their governance framework, including the system of internal control.

Greater transparency is a key element of the Framework and is at the heart of the Government's commitment to enable the public to hold their authorities to account for the way they spend public money. In preparing the Statement of Assurance, Fire and Rescue Authorities may consider the principles of transparency set out in the *Code of Recommended Practice for Local Authorities on Data Transparency*.

Fire and Rescue Authorities already consult on, and publish, their Community Risk Management Plans (CRMP) / Safety Plan, which set out local strategies including cross-border, multi-authority and national arrangements where appropriate. The Statement of Assurance should include details of consultation on these plans, and confirm that appropriate information was provided to enable active and informed participation.

The Statement of Assurance may also indicate where Fire and Rescue Authorities have entered into agreements and/or mutual aid arrangements with other relevant bodies. The level of detail included will be a matter for each individual fire and rescue authority and may be linked to their CRMP.

It is not the aim of Statements of Assurance to set out the operational procedures for Fire and Rescue Authorities. However, Statements of Assurance are the appropriate vehicle with regard to specific events that raise issues of operational competence or delivery. For example, when advice is received under health and safety or other legislation, it is appropriate for the fire and rescue authority to use the Statement of Assurance as a means to inform their communities that these matters have been considered and, where appropriate, acted on.

Issues for consideration:

Financial Implications

Design costs are within existing budgets. **Limited printed documents may be produced internally** with the document available (published) on the Service website. Copies required for specific reasons can be requested.

Legal Implications

Evidence is required of performing against expectations set within the Framework (meeting provisions of the Localism Act 2011). The Framework sets out a requirement to publish Statements of Assurance (annually).

Protective Security

Data accompanying this Statement of Assurance meets data security policy requirements.

Procurement and Social Value

The Statement of Assurance has no direct procurement implications. The design and publication of the Statement of Assurance is in line with existing internal policy and procedure.

The content of the Statement of Assurance provides evidence of financial accomplishments in relation to accounting regulations, which is underpinned by efficiency, effectiveness and public value.

Risk Implications

Failure to publish this Statement of Assurance may compromise the organisation in relation to its duties under the Framework.

Environmental Implications

The document will be published on the Service website with limited numbers printed to reduce the impact on the environment. Copies required for specific reasons can be requested.

Consultation and Engagement undertaken:

The Statement of Assurance is a report drawn from a number of already published sources across the Service, e.g. Public Performance reports, HMICFRS outcomes and relevant stakeholders have been consulted where applicable to check content.

Report Implications

Monitoring Officer comments:

N/A

Signature

Date

Section 151 Officer comments:

N/A

Signature

Date

5. Equality comments:

This Statement of Assurance is a retrospective report on achievements against the Framework requirements and the priorities set within the Safety Plan 2020-24 which is supported by an associated People Impact Assessment. This document will be available on request in any language. This detail will be included in the final document.

6. Background/supporting papers:

The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government's (formerly DCLG) - Guidance on statements of assurance for fire and rescue authorities in England available if required.

7. Public access to information:

The Statement of Assurance will be published on the Service's website and available in print version on request.

8. Is the publication of this report to be deferred?

N/A

REPORT AUTHOR:

| | |
|-----------------|-------------------------------------|
| Author | Mandy Eeles |
| Position | Safety Plan Manager |
| Date | 17th October 2022 |



Staffordshire Fire
and Rescue Service

Statement of Assurance 2021/22



www.staffordshirefire.gov.uk

Page 41



Staffordshire
Fire and Rescue Service
preventing • protecting • responding

If you would like this document in another language or format, or if you require the services of an interpreter please **contact us**.

Contents

Polish

Jeżeli chcieliby Państwo otrzymać ten dokument w innym języku lub w innym formacie albo jeżeli potrzebna jest pomoc tłumacza, to prosimy o kontakt z nami.

French

Si vous souhaitez obtenir ce document dans une autre langue ou sous un autre format ou si vous avez besoin des services d'un interprète, veuillez nous contacter.

Urdu

یہ دستاویز اگر آپ کو کسی دیگر زبان یا دیگر شکل میں درکار ہو، یا اگر آپ کو ترجمان کی خدمات چاہئیں تو برائے مہربانی ہم سے رابطہ کیجئے۔

Bengali

যদি আপনি এই ডকুমেন্ট অন্য ভাষায় বা ফরমেটে চান অথবা যদি আপনার একজন ইন্টারপ্রেটারের প্রয়োজন হয়, তাহলে দয়া করে আমাদের সাথে যোগাযোগ করুন।

Punjabi

ਜੇ ਤੁਸੀਂ ਇਸ ਦਸਤਾਵੇਜ਼ ਤੁਹਾਨੂੰ ਕਿਸੇ ਹੋਰ ਭਾਸ਼ਾ ਵਿਚ ਜਾਂ ਕਿਸੇ ਹੋਰ ਰੂਪ ਵਿਚ ਚਾਹੀਦਾ ਹੈ, ਜਾਂ ਜੇ ਤੁਹਾਨੂੰ ਗੱਲਬਾਤ ਸਮਝਾਉਣ ਲਈ ਕਿਸੇ ਇੰਟਰਪ੍ਰੀਟਰ ਦੀ ਲੋੜ ਹੈ, ਤਾਂ ਤੁਸੀਂ ਸਾਨੂੰ ਦੱਸੋ।

Arabic

إذا أردت هذه الوثيقة بلغة أخرى أو بطريقة أخرى، أو إذا كنت بحاجة إلى خدمات مترجم، فنرجو أن تقوم بالاتصال بنا.

Chinese

本文件可以翻譯為另一語文版本，或製作成另一格式，如有此需要，或需要傳譯員的協助，請與我們聯絡。

Farsi

اگر این مدرک را به زبانی دیگر یا در فرمتی دیگر میخواستید و یا اگر احتیاج به سرویس مترجم دارید، لطفاً با ما تماس بگیرید

| | |
|---|----|
| Welcome | 4 |
| Introduction | 6 |
| Our Priorities | 7 |
| Your Service | 8 |
| Governance and assurance | 10 |
| Priority 1: Prevention and early intervention Safety Campaigns | 16 |
| Priority 2: Protecting Staffordshire and its people Responding to the COVID-19 pandemic | 20 |
| Priority 3: Public confidence His Majesty's Inspectorate of Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) inspection | 26 |
| Priority 4: Service reform | 30 |
| Financial overview | 36 |
| Our Year 2021-22 | 38 |
| What do you think of our Statement of Assurance? | 40 |

 **0300 330 1000**



Welcome

Page 43

We hope you can find some time to read through our annual Statement of Assurance for 2021/22. When our **Safety Plan 2020-2024** was first published in 2020, we promised you that we would be open about our intentions, make our plans clear and easy to understand and provide regular updates about our performance. In this report, we would like to tell you about the progress we have made against the priorities set out in our **Safety Plan** and explain the financial, governance and operational arrangements that were in place for the period of 1 April 2021 to 31 March 2022.

In 2021, we said good-bye to Chief Fire Officer, Becci Bryant on her retirement from the Service. I was honoured to be appointed as Chief Fire Officer in October 2021 and following my appointment I recruited to the vacant Deputy Chief Fire Officer position. Glynn Luznyj was successful in gaining that position following a rigorous process. Both Glynn and I have spent all of our careers within Staffordshire and we are fully committed to providing

the best Service to both the City and the County. We also welcomed our new Assistant Chief Fire Officer Michelle Hickmott who joined us from London Fire Brigade. Our new leadership team is supported by a wealth of experience and skills from our staff across the organisation. Our ambition is always to improve the services we provide to the public, and we will continue to do so through our Service Transformation programme.

Work streams aligned to Service reform are all developed through our Transformation Board, which will ensure a Service Fit for Tomorrow in line with the Staffordshire Commissioner's priorities. The Service Transformation programme will be focusing upon reform in the following key areas:

- Corporate restructure
- Response and Crewing
- Prevention and Protection
- Estates and Shared Services

During the last year, the Service has been working closely with the new Staffordshire Commissioner, Ben Adams, and has presented a number of options for Service transformation that will see a more efficient and effective Fire and Rescue Service and one that can achieve improved productivity as part of the next stages of its transformation work. The Commissioner quite rightly expects every pound of taxpayer's money invested in Fire and Rescue to be spent wisely and for Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Service to continue to seek efficiencies. It has to be recognised that balancing the Medium-Term Financial Strategy is becoming increasingly difficult as budgets are reduced, a further £2m of additional savings will be required by 2026 and as such a focus upon efficiency remains a key priority.

As Chief Fire Officer, I recognise and understand the financial challenges ahead. However, I remain committed to investing in the Service and its people to ensure that we have the best equipment, skills and structures from which to deliver the highest level of service to our communities. Our focus upon effectiveness and efficiency needs to continue, but we also need to invest now to provide the platform from which we can improve. The future will continue to be challenging. Given our good record of making savings, smarter use of technology, more efficient crewing models and sharing more buildings and back-office costs with Staffordshire Police, the Commissioner and the Service believe this to be achievable. We have also taken the opportunity in this report to tell you about our latest His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) report

following the inspection that took place during 2021. The inspection focused on our effectiveness, efficiency and how well we look after our people. We have been rated as 'Good' at being effective in understanding and preventing fires and other risks and responding to major and multi-agency incidents. We were also rated as 'Good' in how we make the service affordable now and in the future.

However, there were a number of areas in which we were rated as 'Requires Improvement' and HMICFRS has identified a number of areas for improvement. I would like to reassure you that I take these areas very seriously and I am confident that we can address them, many of these have already moved forward significantly since the inspection last autumn.

One particular area where I would welcome support from our local communities is in relation to on-call firefighters. Our recruitment campaign has been running for over a year now, but we are still struggling to recruit people, despite it being a paid role. Our on-call firefighters come from a range of backgrounds, most have the role as secondary employment although for some it is their main job. We would encourage people who may never have thought about it before to consider joining us, as on-call firefighters really are vital to our local communities.



Rob Barber
Chief Fire Officer

Introduction

The **Fire and Rescue National Framework** for England requires us to provide an Annual Statement of Assurance on financial, governance and operational matters so that our communities, partners, local authorities and Government can readily assess our governance arrangements and performance.

This Statement of Assurance sets out the financial, governance and response arrangements that the Staffordshire Commissioner had in place for the period 1 April 2021 to 31 March 2022. It reflects on the progress made by the Service over the past 12 months in taking our priorities forward and is designed to provide our people, partners and our local communities with the reassurance that we will not compromise on our commitment to protecting our local communities from fire and other emergencies, reducing risk and improving firefighter safety.

We would also like to reflect upon the impact the COVID pandemic has had on our activities and resources and use this as an opportunity to tell you about our plans.

*We have written this statement with the aim of providing our communities with information that is clear and easy to understand. This Statement includes extracts or links to key documents, or other sources of information, where relevant in accordance with the guidance published by the Department for Communities and Local Government on **Statements of Assurance for fire and rescue authorities in England**.*

Page 44



Our Priorities

This report highlights the progress Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Service has made against each of the four priorities set out in our community risk management plan, which we call our **Safety Plan 2020-2024** and meets the requirements of an Annual Statement of Assurance, confirming the adequacy of arrangements for effective management of financial, governance and operational matters for the period. The priorities set out in our **Safety Plan 2020-2024** compliment and support those of the **Staffordshire Commissioner's Fire and Rescue Plan 2021-2024**.

We have set out our priorities for you below alongside those of the Staffordshire Commissioner to show how our priorities support and complement each other:

- 1 Prevention and early intervention**

We aim to develop a detailed community risk profile of Staffordshire, so that we can use our resources in the most efficient and effective way

Help people most at risk stay safe (Staffordshire Commissioner)

Deliver effective and targeted prevention work that provides early help to individuals, families and communities so that we keep people safe from fires and other incidents, they feel safer and there is less pressure on fire response services.
- 2 Protecting Staffordshire and its people**

We aim to reduce and remove risks in our communities using a combination of prevention, protection and response activities and help make Staffordshire a safer place to live, work and visit

Protect people and places (Staffordshire Commissioner)

Protect people, premises and the environment through the right balance of education, advice and support and the use of regulatory and enforcement powers to keep people safe.
- 3 Public confidence**

We aim to report regularly on our progress and communicate openly about our plans so that, they are clearly understood, meet our legal duties and provide assurance to the public in a way which is transparent and easy to scrutinise

A flexible and responsive service (Staffordshire Commissioner)

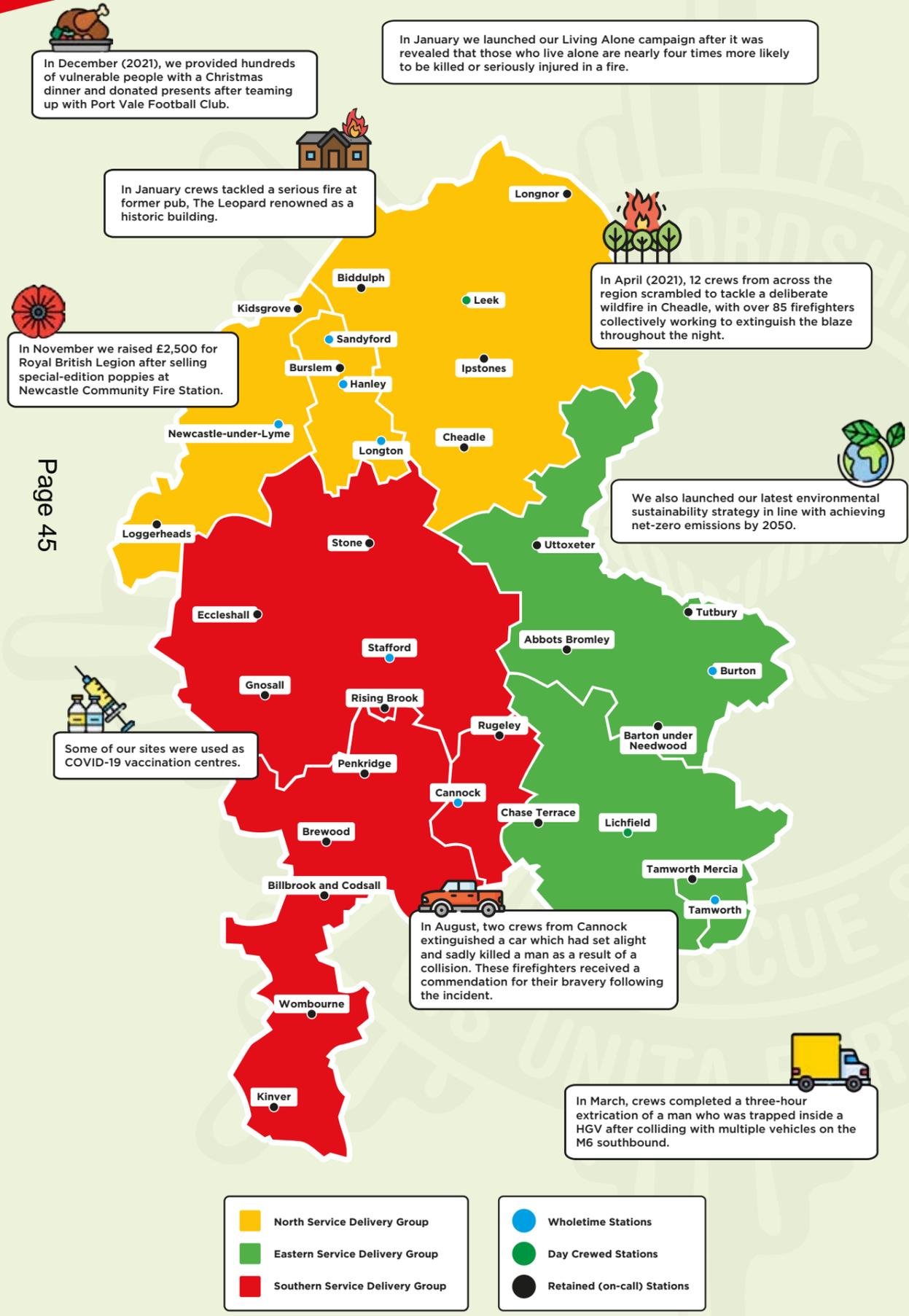
Ensure your local fire and rescue service continues to be accessible and responsive so that risk is appropriately and proportionally managed, community and firefighter safety remains paramount and high levels of public confidence and trust in the service are maintained.
- 4 Service reform**

We aim to develop and support a diverse, healthy and highly professional workforce who are motivated and empowered to improve our service

A fire and rescue service for tomorrow (Staffordshire Commissioner)

Ensure that Staffordshire Fire and Rescue is fit for a changing future and is a leading example for other services to follow so that the people of Staffordshire can be reassured that their money is being used efficiently and effectively and the workforce better reflects the communities it serves.

Your Service



Page 45



Scope of Responsibility

Since 1 August 2018, the Staffordshire Commissioner (the Commissioner) has been responsible for the governance of the Service, in addition to overseeing Staffordshire Police. The Commissioner is elected by public vote to hold the Chief Fire Officer and Chief Constable to account and ensure local fire and rescue and police services are effective and efficient. Complaints and conduct matters in relation to the Chief Fire Officer are also handled by the Commissioner.

Corporate governance is about how the Commissioner ensures the right things are being done in the right way, for the right people, in an inclusive, open, honest, timely way. The Commissioner is responsible for making sure that:

- the Service is accountable and conducts its business in accordance with the law and relevant standards
- we have effective arrangements in place to identify and manage risk
- we continually look to improve the way we operate and deliver our services
- that public money is safeguarded, properly accounted for, and used economically, efficiently and effectively to meet the needs of our communities across Staffordshire.

The Commissioner is responsible for approving the Service's community risk management plan, which we call our Safety Plan. In the summer of 2020, the Commissioner approved our current **Safety Plan 2020-2024** which set out the Service's strategic vision, priorities and objectives and considers how we will best respond to and improve the services we deliver to our communities across Staffordshire.

The Commissioner has also fully satisfied the duty under the Local Government Act 1999 to make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the way in which the functions of the Service are delivered, having regard to a combination of economy, efficiency and effectiveness. In discharging these overall responsibilities, the Staffordshire Commissioner maintained responsibility for putting in place proper arrangements for the governance of its affairs, facilitating the effective exercise of its functions, which includes arrangements for the management of risk.



Ben Adams
Staffordshire
Commissioner

Scrutiny and Performance Management

A governance framework is in place which enables the Commissioner to monitor, scrutinise, support and challenge the Service's performance against the priorities set out in our Safety Plan and consider whether those objectives have led to the delivery of appropriate, cost-effective services.

A well-established and robust performance management system is in place internally throughout the Service with senior management carrying out regular performance monitoring. Performance against delivery of our strategic objectives is measured by using key performance indicators (both quantitative and qualitative). Achievements against these key performance indicators are reported regularly to the Service Delivery Board and monitoring reports are scrutinised by the Commissioner's office

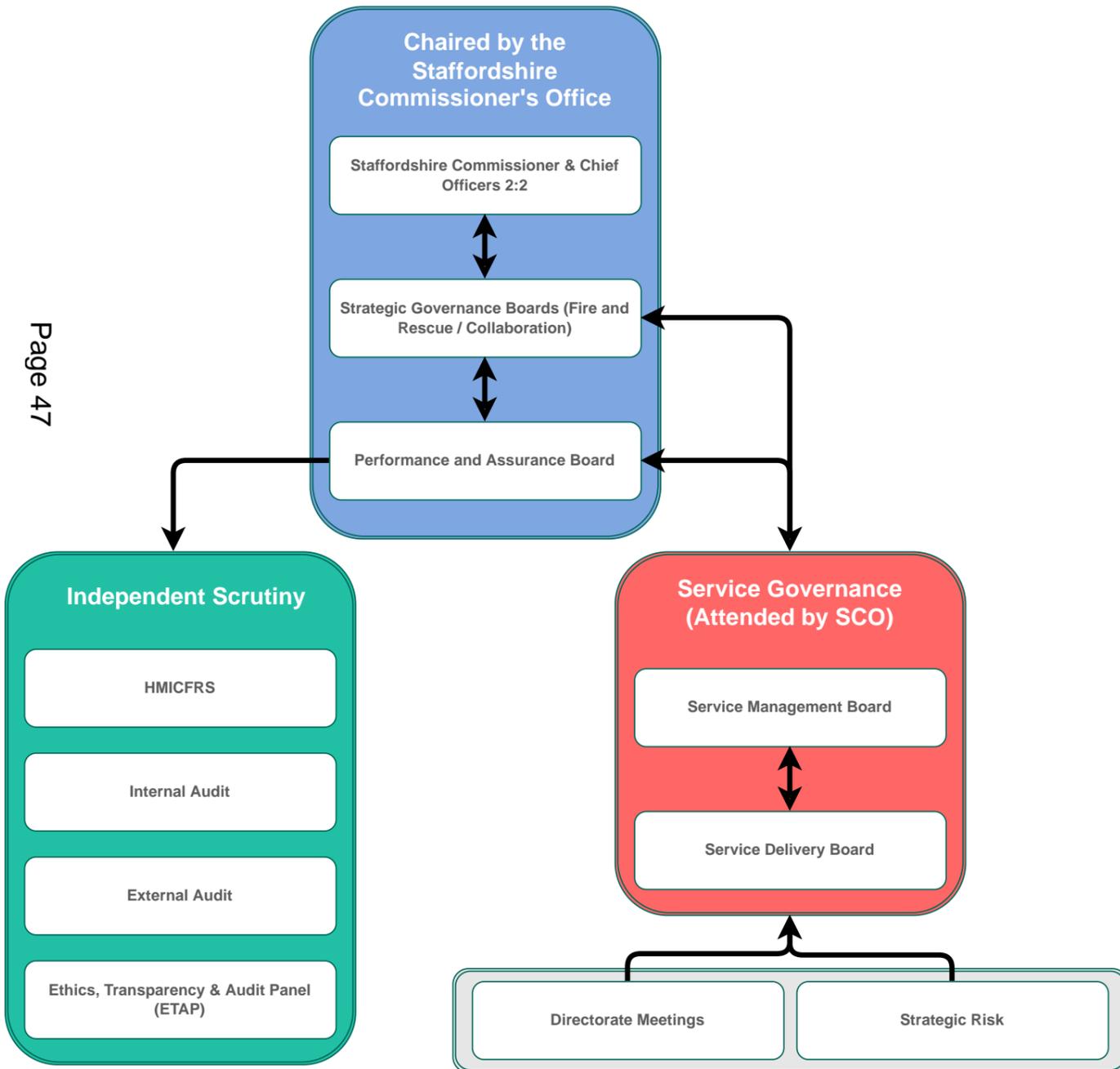
at Strategic Governance Board (SGB). SGB also scrutinise detailed financial reports on a quarterly basis. The reports include full details of performance against budget for the key reporting areas namely, revenue, capital, cash and delivery of efficiencies and savings.

Under the governance arrangements the Ethics, Transparency and Audit Panel (ETAP), which also has a separate Finance Panel that receives bi-monthly finance reports, performs the function of the Audit Committee. The Finance Panel includes a number of qualified accountants who are able to provide detailed scrutiny to the monthly Resource Control Report, Internal and External Audit Reports, also the **Annual Statement of Accounts** and provide professional advice to the members of ETAP.





The Governance Structure in place under the Staffordshire Commissioner during 2021/2022 is detailed below:



Public Performance meetings

Public Performance meetings are the forum in which the Commissioner holds the Chief Fire Officer to account for the service to the public. The Service is required to demonstrate the quality of its service in different areas and is assessed against the vision of the Commissioner's Fire and Rescue Plan. This year's topics included the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on our performance, prevention activity during the pandemic, police/fire collaboration, funding and precept. The meetings also consider fire and rescue performance data, allowing the Commissioner to assess performance against the priorities set out in our **Safety Plan 2020-2024**.

Operational assurance

Staffordshire (Fire and Rescue) Authority (the Authority) has carried out its functions in accordance with the defined statutory and policy framework in which it is required to operate:

- **Safety Plan 2020-2024**
- **Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004**
- **Civil Contingencies Act 2004**
- **Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005**
- **Fire and Rescue Services (Emergencies) (England) Order 2007**
- **Localism Act 2011**
- **Fire and Rescue National Framework for England**
- **Health and Safety Act at Work etc. Act 1974**

Mutual aid arrangements are in place with neighbouring fire and rescue services to provide resilience for cross-border, large scale or complex incidents where additional resources are needed. We support the Staffordshire Civil Contingencies Unit, which co-ordinates multi-agency training, planning for and response to complex incidents that would have a large impact on our county, e.g. pandemic illnesses, wide-scale flooding or terror-related incidents. The Service contributes to the national resilience programme and we can make a number of our assets and resources available to support across the country to support major incidents that would otherwise overwhelm local resources.

We have robust business continuity plans in place which are integral to managing corporate risk and to ensure we can continue to provide a fire and rescue service to our communities in the event of a major disruption.

Annual Governance Statement

The Commissioner will receive all funding, including the government grant, and other sources of income related to fire and rescue services. But it is important to note both Staffordshire Police Fire and Rescue Service and Staffordshire Police remain separate organisations with separate budgets, staff and governance processes.

The Annual Governance Statement is published as part of the Service's **Annual Statement of Accounts**. The statement publicly explains how the Service manages its governance and internal control measures. In addition, the Narrative Statement contained within the **Annual Statement of Accounts** also provides the reader with a broad understanding of the Service's financial performance for the year ended 31 March 2022, by clearly explaining the funding position, and how this funding is spent in order to deliver the priorities as set out within the **Safety Plan 2020-2024**. It is an open and honest account of how we ensure financial management systems are adequate and effective and demonstrate a sound system of internal control, assuring utmost integrity in all dealings. The Annual Governance Statement for the period 1st April 2021 to 31st March 2022 is published on our website within the **Annual Statement of Accounts**.

We are satisfied that during 2021/22, the Authority's financial, governance and operational assurance arrangements were adequate and operating effectively overall and that our business has been conducted in accordance with proper standards and law and that public money was properly accounted for and used efficiently and effectively. In addition, we are satisfied that the Authority has done everything within its power to comply with the requirements of the **Fire and Rescue National Framework for England**.



Our Progress

1 Priority 1: Prevention and early intervention

To prevent fires and respond promptly and effectively to fires and other emergencies we said we would:

“Help people most at risk stay safe”
(Staffordshire Commissioner)



Work together with our partners across the county to share information and create a more detailed understanding of the risks to our communities and identify the people and properties most at risk



Prioritise these risks to ensure our activities have the most positive impact on community safety



Develop targeted activities to make the most efficient use of our resources and minimise our impact on the environment



Work with partners to educate our communities and share goals to reduce duplication and inefficiencies in the public sector

What we have done and what we plan to do

Safe and Well visits

With the relaxing of Government COVID restrictions during in the summer of 2021, we saw a substantial increase in the number of Safe and Well visits we completed. In 2021/22, we completed 3,583 face to face Safe and Well visits. Whilst social-distancing was in place we put a process in place to conduct ‘non-contact’ assessments via telephone to ensure we continued to give advice and guidance and provide equipment where needed to those most vulnerable members of our communities. The Safe and Well figure provided does not fully capture or reflect this method of contact.

During 2022, we will see the introduction of the new Home Fire Safety Visit and we are currently working on integrating a new online Home Fire Safety Check tool, called ‘Safelincs’, as part of our revised Safe and Well offer. ‘Safelincs’ will be for use by members of the public and our partner agencies. Following

completion of an on-line questionnaire, they will be able to access tailored safety information and guidance, based on their vulnerability and risk score. ‘Safelincs’ is already being utilised by a number of other Fire and Rescue Services and is linked with the work of the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC).

New Contact Centre

In 2021, we took the opportunity to combine our Community Advice and Reception teams and create our new Contact Centre providing one main point of contact for all enquiries. The team manage the process for Safe and Well referrals and bookings, and is the first port of call for other non-emergency enquiries, such as the booking of headquarters facilities and managing the front of house communications. Recently, they have also been liaising with our NHS partners, booking deliveries, by our Safe and Well technicians of blood pressure monitors and equipment to GP surgeries, as well as ensuring anti-viral medication is delivered to COVID-19 patients across the county.

Mental wellbeing

One-in-four adults experience a mental health problem such as anxiety or depression. Older adults may delay seeking help for their mental health for many reasons such as embarrassment, fear they may lose their independence or lack of awareness of or the ability to access appropriate healthcare services. Mental health problems can affect a person’s physical health, wellbeing, and their relationships with others if left untreated and potentially contribute to them experiencing a fire or other emergency.

Colleagues from across the Service have participated in the **FIRESIDE Study** a partnership research project with Keele University, University of Chester and Midlands Partnership NHS Foundation Trust. The aim of this research is to explore whether fire and rescues service teams carrying our home fire safety visits could play an important role in supporting older adults to access help and advice about mental health. The research team will analyse information provided via focus groups and help us understand whether we could expand these visits to include mental health support and advice.

Prince’s Trust

The Service has worked in partnership with The Prince’s Trust since 2014 delivering a range of programmes for 16-25-year-olds who are unemployed or work for a maximum of 16 hours per week that help get them into volunteering, further training, education and work.

During 2021/22 we supported 105 Young people on our Princes’ Trust programmes, ‘Get Started’, ‘Explore’ and ‘Team’. This figure is lower than our projected numbers due to the impact of COVID restrictions and the Government’s Kickstart Scheme, which offered funding to employers to create new jobs for 16 to 24 year olds on Universal Credit who

are at risk of long-term unemployment. We anticipate that the numbers of young people engaging with the schemes will continue to increase to pre-pandemic levels over the next few months.

We have recently recruited a new Team Programme Leader for Stone, with the intention that Stone Community Fire Station can operate once again as an independent site as it was pre-pandemic. We have also secured further funding to run an additional Explore Programme from Newcastle-under-Lyme Community Fire Station. This will allow us to form new working relationships and partnerships and pave the way towards supporting more regular Prince’s Trust programmes in the in the north of the county.

Education

The Service is committed to supporting schools and communities to help them make informed and positive lifestyle choices, improving health, safety and wellbeing through direct engagement via ‘Safe+Sound’ workshops and partnership working. During COVID-19 restrictions the delivery of the ‘Safe+Sound’ programme from fire stations was not possible, so we developed an on-line workshop to support families and children educated at home. These weekly online broadcasts, at 10am Wednesday (term-time only), will continue to run through to the end of the 21/22 academic year (also available on demand www.learnliveuk.com/safesound) and start again in the 22/23 academic year.

Device numbers peaked on 30 March 2022 with 5,107 devices tuning in nationally (3,134 of those were Staffordshire based). Between October 2021 and March 2022 the average number of devices, tuning in each week was 2,826.

Our Progress

There are on average five different subjects covered per programme, all produced and delivered by the Service and our partners. Work has started with the personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education leads for both Stoke-On-Trent and Staffordshire to link our programmes into the PSHE curriculum to enable teachers to see where our content supports their curriculum requirements.

A total of 130 devices tuned into the Winter Driving Special programme aimed at adults, which included advice on winter safety checks, approaching level crossings, eyesight and driving and driving in challenging weather conditions.

We have produced a Home Safety Special programme that is available on the **LearnLive channel** to view on demand. This programme is for older members of our community to provide advice, information and education on topics such as fire safety in the home, road safety and staying safe online. We are also planning to develop a mechanism for our Safe and Well technicians to be able promote the Home Safety Special during a Home Fire Safety visit as it will reinforce and add value to topics they cover on their visit.

Targeted education

We are planning to introduce a targeted education offer for Key Stage 3 and 4 children who attend alternative provision. This offer will link to the Key Stage 3 and 4 PSHE curriculum and to the science, technology, engineering and math education (STEM) curriculums where possible. We envisage that these sessions will take place on our fire stations and will use the Safe+Sound brand and style of delivery. It is likely that a pilot will take place in two locations between September and December 2022, which will help us to understand the best way to deliver the programme in the future.

Business education

We continued to support businesses suffering a fire throughout the pandemic, with post-fire recovery advice. Our Business Support Lead also supports the police and our own Learning and Development Team with staff training, fire, evacuation chair and general fire safety as well as providing accredited fire safety courses for businesses.

Safety campaigns

The National Fire Chiefs Council's (NFCC) 'Be Water Aware' campaign ran from 26 April and 2 May 2021. The aim being to encourage people to be safe in or around water by being aware of the risks. With the easing of COVID restrictions, it was anticipated many people would head to coastal locations and inland water beauty spots. The Service supported the campaign by actively encouraging people not to be complacent when spending time in and around water.

In good weather, people enjoy the outdoors and will take the opportunity to cool off in the sea, lakes or rivers. In recognition of this, we adopted a different approach to our prevention campaign during the summer. Instead of telling of people to stay out of the water we focussed our messages on improving understanding of the risks and what to do if you get into difficulty. To improve awareness amongst young people we messaged parents and teenagers, through Safe and Sound, our own social channels and through paid social media using the hashtag #Floattolive.

Using resources from the NFCC, the Service took to social media in support of Home Safety Week, which ran from 14 - 21 June 2021. We encouraged people to use and regularly test their smoke and carbon monoxide alarms to reduce the risk of incidents in the home.

During October, we issued a warning to drivers about the dangers of storing fuel at home, as motorists responded to the 'fuel crisis' by flocking to forecourts to fill up their vehicles. We reminded motorists to take extra care when filling up and, in an effort to deter stockpiling, be aware of the risks of inappropriate handling or storage of such highly flammable materials.

In November, we reminded residents to celebrate Bonfire Night safely and to be mindful of the dangers of fireworks and of the spread of coronavirus. With fewer people choosing to attend professionally organised public displays for fear of catching COVID, we reminded our communities of the firework code and warned against garden bonfire parties due to the risk of fires getting out of control.

In January 2022, we launched our new **Living Alone** fire safety campaign, aimed at people aged 45+ who live alone as they are nearly four times more likely to die or be seriously injured in a house fire. The campaign will continue to run throughout 2022, focusing on different areas. The first part of the campaign focussed on cooking safety as statistics show that 72 per cent of accidental house fires involving people who lived alone started in the kitchen.

Fire safety in the home booklets are now available on our **website** in different languages for those members of our communities who do not have English as a first language and prefer to read in their native language. We are also looking to make some hard copies of the booklets available for those who do not have web access.



Our Progress

2 Priority 2: Protecting Staffordshire and its people

To protect our people, buildings, the environment and reduce local risk we said we would:



Continue to modify and develop our activities to embrace the changing needs of the county and use advances in technology and techniques to ensure our response to emergencies is efficient and effective



Contribute to building communities which are fit for the future – resilient, healthy and sustainable



Contribute to ensuring that buildings in Staffordshire are safe for residents and visitors for generations to come



Ensure that we have the capability to meet new and emerging risks from incidents that may involve flooding, wildfire, terrorism or supporting other emergency services

What we have done and what we plan to do

Fire Safety Audits and Building Regulation activity

The Service regularly inspects business premises to make sure that they comply with fire safety legislation. We aim to help and support to businesses to operate safely, but we will consider, and where necessary, take legal action where lives are at risk. We hope that by taking such action we will deter other business owners from failing to take their responsibilities seriously and encourage them to take necessary fire precautions to keep their premises safe from fire.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, we introduced telephone audits as an alternative method of engagement in order to ensure we continued to protect members of the public and fulfil our regulatory responsibilities to the communities of Staffordshire. The proportion of face-to-face fire safety audits increased steadily between October 2021 and March 2022 in line with the relaxing of COVID-19 restrictions. The upward trajectory is likely to continue into 2022/23 as activity returns to pre-pandemic levels with a

focus upon ensuring increased risk properties such as care homes receive regular audits to ensure the safety of residents.

We are reviewing our Risk Based Inspection Programme following the publication of preliminary guidance on higher risk occupancies and relative priorities for Risk Based Inspection Programmes in October 2021. The factors to be considered when identifying high-risk premises are:

- Likelihood of a fire occurring
- Likelihood of non-compliance with fire safety regulations and standards
- Societal life risk

In October 2021, at Stoke-on-Trent Crown Court, the owner of premises in Penkull pleaded guilty to a single offence of breaching the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 and was sentenced to 12-months' community service and ordered to pay full costs within 28 days.

We learned of the breach following a serious fire at the premises in May 2020. We had to rescue several occupants from the burning building, which the owner had converted from

“Protect people and places”
(Staffordshire Commissioner)

commercial use into mixed commercial and residential usage without the appropriate planning approval. The owner failed to take general fire precautions, placing people at serious risk as the fire occurred in the building where people were sleeping.

High Rise Buildings Inspection Programme activity

As part of the High-Rise Inspection Programme (also known as the Building Risk Review Programme), the Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) identified 50 premises for inspection across Staffordshire. Following the fire at Ridware House in Lichfield in November 2020, we prioritised this piece of work and audits of all 50 premises were completed well ahead of MHCLG's deadline of December 2021.

Community sprinkler project

In 2017, we identified 42 blocks of flats over five storeys in Staffordshire, which required sprinkler systems fitting. It was our aim to get these systems in place within a ten-year period. By the end of 2022 with work on 16 of those buildings set to be completed, we are well on track to meet that objective working with our partners in social housing.

We are working in collaboration with Midland Heart to provide sprinklers in a number of their properties. What started as an idea to retrofit sprinklers in a single block of flats in Staffordshire has now turned in a much bigger project to provide sprinklers in eight buildings across the wider West Midlands area.

School Court in Hednesford and Camoys Court in Hanley are two retirement villages where the residents will now benefit from the added protection that sprinklers provide. However, it is the completion of the sprinkler system at Charnwood House in Lichfield, which marks the most recent success of our Community

Sprinkler Project. This 5-storey block of flats formed one of the original 42 premises we identified back in 2017.

Following the fire that occurred on the 11th floor at Northwood Court in Hanley in March 2022, we will be taking the opportunity to engage with local social housing providers about the benefits of sprinklers. At the same time, Stoke-on-Trent City Council have continued their own programme of retrofitting sprinklers in all their high-rise blocks of flats with four systems installed over the past year and a further two installations already underway.

Fire hydrants

Working fire hydrants are essential for firefighters to be able to access water sources for fighting fires and protecting the public. We have a new detailed Hydrant Policy and ensure that our new technicians receive all the necessary training to perform statutory testing of the very high rated adopted fire hydrants around the county. There are currently 39,000 fire hydrants within Staffordshire and since the start of 21/22:

- 2,096 - Statutory testing completed in accordance with the requirements the Fire Services Act 2004.
- 401 Adopted fire hydrants - inspected on new housing developments. We tend to see around 200 new schemes per year.
- 109 Adopted fire hydrants - checked after the water undertaker carried out repairs.
- 720 Location Plates - installed to make sure fire crews can locate the hydrant when they need to.
- 143 Inspections - completed for adopted fire hydrants, reported as defective.

Our Progress

Prevent, protect, and hydrant management system (PPHMS)

We are developing a new system (PPHMS) which will provide one integrated location and database for our fire safety audits, enforcement activity, home fire safety visits and hydrant information. We have also developed risk profile maps in order to help target those who are most vulnerable.

Improving our environmental impact

Protecting our local environment starts at 'home' and in January, we launched our new **Environmental and Sustainability Strategy 2022-2027**. Our previous Environmental Protection Strategy, launched in 2011, led to an increased awareness of environmental issues across the Service, focussed on good practices such as turning off lights, and increased recycling. Our new strategy explores how small changes to the way we work can add up to larger environmental savings through a reduction in our carbon emissions.

To improve the environment and help us reduce our carbon footprint further, we will focus on:

- Reducing waste
- Being more sustainable during

Operational incidents

- Improving air quality
- Reducing energy usage
- Generating more green space across our sites

For example during active firefighting, in the case of wildfires we will now look to understand new tactics to extinguish fires more quickly, consider environmental protection as part of our plans and include this in training, as well as use more innovative equipment. We will look at ways of improving how we power our buildings and equipment, dispose of our waste as well as developing green spaces for our staff to enjoy and help improve their wellbeing.

It is hoped that the new strategy will have a positive impact across three distinct areas:

- Environment - by reducing pollutants
- Social - by improving air quality and work environments
- Economic - by reducing our carbon footprint



Our response to the COVID-19 pandemic

We have continued to review our localised measures to help protect our staff and our communities from the risk of catching COVID as we continued to see high levels of infections in Staffordshire. We issued revised people and workplace guidance in relation to COVID 19 throughout the pandemic. There is a legislative obligation on the Service to ensure the safety of our workforce whilst continuing to provide our services safely to our communities and maintain our emergency response availability.

Whilst we continued to maintain a COVID-secure environment, we encouraged our staff who were able to work from home to do so around the festive period to help keep infection rates low with the emergence of the new more virulent Omicron variant.

With coronavirus cases above the England and West Midlands average, the Service volunteered the use of several of our fire stations as sites for local walk-in COVID vaccination centres to our NHS partners. We wanted to help make it possible for everyone eligible for the vaccine to have easy access to a vaccination site, both for their own health and the safety of the wider community.

It is clear that, particularly in rural locations, some community members were experiencing difficulties accessing designated COVID vaccination centres. Volunteers from across the Service stepped up to support the Staffordshire Local Resilience Forum in delivering COVID vaccination programmes

within hard to reach areas. Our teams worked alongside health colleagues within targeted locations throughout the county on an outreach basis, providing support with planning, logistics and transport.

This approach helped improve the equity of access to vaccines for all and ensure that any barriers to access are removed. In particular a number of seasonal fruit farms with significant numbers of migrant workers were targeted, and for many people this was the first time they had ever had a vaccination. The number of workers on these farms, which are located all around the county, increased as we moved towards the summer months.

We also provided volunteers, logistical and planning support to the Midlands Partnership NHS Foundation Trust for pop-up mass vaccination clinics set up in response to the increased numbers of the Delta variant being identified in areas such as Leek. We also supported surge testing in these areas by dropping off and collecting home test kits as a further way of identifying any positive cases that had not been picked up. Our continued support to these activities was crucial in ensuring a continuation of the effective and efficient response to the pandemic in order to save lives and keep people safe.

Our firefighters joined with partners in the NHS to deliver vital anti-viral medication to the most vulnerable people in our communities with COVID-19. People with

conditions such as cancer and other serious illnesses that affect the immune system, are assessed by an NHS medical professional and then our firefighters pick up the drugs from local hospitals and pharmacies and deliver them to the patient the same day. The whole process, from assessment to delivery of the drug, usually takes no more than five days. By deploying our people smartly and safely, this has been a relatively simple process for us to help make sure that the most in-need people of Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent are kept as safe as possible from the devastating impact of this disease.

In January 2021 HMICFRS published its report, which explores how fire and rescue services supported their communities during the COVID 19 pandemic. The report highlighted our involvement in improving the take up of COVID vaccinations supporting the Staffordshire Vaccination Equality Group, by helping with the pop-up vaccination clinics. To read the report in full [click here](#).



Our Progress

3 Priority 3: Public confidence

To maintain public confidence and trust in the service we said we would:

“A flexible and responsive service”
(Staffordshire Commissioner)



Ensure plans and resources are in place to provide a flexible efficient and resilient response to emergency incidents



Consult with our communities and listen to our people when developing our plans and services



Provide evidence that our activities are based on a recognised need and are targeted where they are needed most



Adopt a transparent and easily understood approach to planning and reporting throughout the Service

What we have done and what we plan to do

New Commissioner

In May 2021, Ben Adams was signed in as the new Staffordshire Police Fire and Crime Commissioner, with Helen Fisher as his deputy. During the year they have been visiting crews and teams across the Service to deepen their knowledge about the work we do and the challenges we face. The Statement of Assurance for 2020/21 was prepared for presentation to and sign-off by the new Staffordshire Commissioner. It was then published on our website in accordance with our publication scheme. As a public authority, we are subject to the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA) and are required to maintain a **publication scheme** which describes the information available and where it can be found.

Staffordshire Civil Contingencies Unit (CCU)

The CCU moved from Stafford Fire Station site to its new permanent base at our fire headquarters in July 2021. The new accommodation provides an improved training, exercise and response capability. CCU will be working on enhancing video-conferencing and tactical response facilities in the new location.

New Service Management Team

In October 2021, Becci Bryant retired as Chief Fire Officer after 29 years with the fire and rescue service. Former Deputy Chief Fire Officer, Rob Barber was confirmed as our new Chief Fire Officer at a special meeting of the Police, Fire and Crime Panel on 12 October 2021. Glynn Luznyj (previously our Director of Response) took up his new role as our Deputy Chief Fire Officer on 6 December 2021. These new appointments gave us an opportunity to reflect and look at how best to lead the Service into our next phase.

Home Office fire statistics

Our Performance and Assurance Team collate data and submit an annual response for data to the Home Office. The Home Office has responsibility for fire services in England and collects detailed information on incidents attended by fire and rescue services which it publishes on a dedicated webpage - **Fire statistics**. The source of the data used for Home Office statistical publications involving incidents attended by fire and rescue services is the online Incident Recording System (IRS). Home Office Fire Statistics include:

- Fire and rescue incident statistics, quarterly; presents trends in fires, fire-related fatalities and fire casualties, false alarms and non-fire incidents attended by

fire and rescue services

- Detailed analysis of fires, annual; presents detailed statistics on fires attended by fire and rescue services, and fire-related fatalities and non-fatal casualties in those fires; including analyses of the causes of fires and smoke alarms operation
- Detailed analysis of non-fire incidents, annual; presents detailed statistics on non-fire incidents attended for example emergency medical responding, flooding, road traffic collisions, fatalities and casualties
- Fire and rescue response times, annual; focuses on trends in average response times to different types of fires.

New website

The new Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Service website went live in September 2021. The new version allows for an improved user experience and enhanced accessibility features to make sure we are reaching all our communities within Staffordshire. With over 60 per cent of visitors to the site using a mobile device, the user interface has been designed to be mobile first, to improve user experience, enhance engagement and make the journey through the website much more streamlined. It is also visual instead of text heavy and uses new branding throughout to reflect the modern service, providing a channel, which allows us to be open and transparent with our communities.

Our plans for 2022/23

In January 2022 our Principle Officers Chief met with all heads of department and asked them to provide an update on their plans for 2022. This approach is part of a renewed Service wide focus upon performance management. Heads of department will be held to account for delivery against their plans as will all managers within the Service.

We have now published our Annual Plan 2022 that sets out our strategic priorities for the coming year. The drivers for planning have been our **Safety Plan**, the **Staffordshire Commissioner's Fire and Rescue Plan 2021-2024**, **His Majesty's Inspectorate of Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS)** and the **Fit for the Future initiative**.*

Departments and service delivery groups have in turn set our departmental objectives in their delivery plans, which support the strategic priorities.

All our plans are readily available on a dedicated section of our intranet 'Staffnet' for ease of reference. Staff are encouraged to view those annual plans that are relevant to their area of business and consider how they and their teams can contribute to achieving those objectives.

Annual Plan 2022

The main drivers for planning

- 1. Safety Plan Priorities 2020-2024:**
 - Prevention and early intervention
 - Protecting Staffordshire and its people
 - Public confidence
 - Service reform
- 2. Staffordshire Commissioner's Fire and Rescue Plan 2021-2024:**
 - A flexible and responsive service
 - Protecting people and places
 - Helping people most at risk stay safe
 - A fire service for tomorrow
- 3. HMICFRS – State of Fire Report 2021 and Service Inspection 2021**
- 4. Fit for the Future - How fire and rescue services can improve to meet the challenges of the 21st century (Fire and Rescue Service Employers, NFCC and LGA) October 2020**

Strategic Priorities for 2022

- 1. People Priorities**
 - Cultural reform
 - Increase the diversity within the workforce
 - Improve the training of our workforce through development on leadership, management and all people matters
- 2. Service Transformation**
 - Ensure that we are "able to provide a modern, efficient and sustainable level of service to the public which does not compromise the safety of our staff or our communities."
 - Continue to collaborate effectively with Staffordshire Police and other partner organisations
 - Ensure that public value is prioritised within our transformation
- 3. Prevention and Protection**
 - Deliver on the expected outcomes from the Grenfell Tower Inquiry Phase 2
 - Continue to invest in protection teams training and capabilities
 - Introduce operational staff protection training and accreditation
 - Improve the understanding of risks, planning and performance
 - Increase the delivery and range of prevention work
 - Broaden the role of our prevention work and the opportunities closer with health
- 4. Response**
 - Identify better ways of working - embracing technology and harnessing talent
 - Embed response performance measures
 - Utilise fire standards to identify areas of improvement
 - Implement the environmental strategy in relation to vehicles, equipment, property and during incidents
 - Wider collaboration and strengthen local partnerships
 - Improve our training implementation and recording processes.
- 5. Service wide priorities**
 - Ensure the health, safety and wellbeing of all of our staff
 - Implement the Environmental Strategy
 - Explore greater flexible working systems for staff
 - Support the introduction of technological advancements in the delivery of all aspects of Service work

Page 55



**Fit for the Future is an initiative developed in a partnership between the National Employers (England), the Local Government Association (LGA) and the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC). It looks to provide an evidence-based view of the role of the fire service, so that the role of employees could be properly defined and agreed and clarify the benefits and value that fire and rescue services bring to their communities.*

State of Fire Report 2021

The latest State of Fire and Rescue – The Annual Assessment of Fire and Rescue Services in England 2021 report [click here](#) demonstrates the enormous contribution that the fire sector has made during the global pandemic. The flexibility of all of our staff has been evident throughout demonstrating that our staff can support partners in responding to a variety of tasks.

Locally we have been working hard to ensure that our fire safety or protection teams have

been strengthened and this will mean that our buildings are as safe as possible for both residents and fire fighters alike, this is something that has also been reflected within the national report. The need to accelerate the diversity within the sector is acknowledged and this is something that the Service is focussing upon locally in order to improve. This linked with our continued drive to further develop the culture within the organisation is a priority for the Service, as is the wellbeing of our people.

His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) Inspection

Since 2017, HMICFRS has been responsible for the independent inspection of England's 45 fire and rescue services in addition to national police forces. These inspection reports provide an assessment of a fire and rescue service's effectiveness and efficiency and how well they look after their people. HMICFRS use a system of graded judgments to assess these criteria; 'Outstanding', 'Good', 'Requires Improvement' and 'Inadequate'.

The Service has worked hard to develop a positive and inclusive working environment, values and culture and we remain focused on developing this to underpin the way we serve our communities, carry out our role and work together. These inspections help us to identify best practice and provide further opportunities for learning and improvement, which will ensure that our culture and working practices are as inclusive and supportive as possible and enable people to perform at their best.

HMICFRS had to carry out much of its inspection activity remotely due to the COVID pandemic to help reduce the risk to the sector, staff and public. The inspection was carried out using a blend of virtual and on-site interviews, desktop exercises, focus groups and on-station reality testing.

Although we were inspected over a number of weeks during September and October 2021, the final report was not published until July 2022; in line with HMICFRS's approach of publishing reports in batches and not immediately after each service's inspection is complete. Although the publication date falls outside the period of this Statement of Assurance, we thought it important to share the outcomes with you as part of this report.

Its findings were in many ways positive, although it highlighted issues that we are continuing to invest time and effort in to improve. We are pleased that HMICFRS still recognise us as 'Good' at providing an effective service to the people of Staffordshire and we are well prepared for major incidents. Inspectors also said we are 'Good' at identifying people in our communities who are most at risk from fire and we work well with our partners to reduce this risk. The inspection noted how we have responded positively and proactively to learning from the Grenfell Tower tragedy and have improved the safety

of residents in Staffordshire who live in high-rise buildings through our sprinkler scheme.

HMICFRS found us to have good financial management arrangements in place so we can understand how money is spent and that we collaborate well with the police which means we can make more efficient use of our fleet and buildings. We do, however, need to explore new ways of working and invest in new technologies to help ensure we are using our workforce in the most productive way.

There were however, a number of areas in which we were rated as 'Requires Improvement' and HMICFRS has identified a number of areas for improvement. These included: protecting the public through fire regulation, responding to fire and other emergencies, making the best use of resources, promoting the right values and culture, and ensuring fairness and promoting diversity.

Naturally, we are disappointed in some of the ratings we have received in these areas, but only by going through this inspection process can we identify and make improvements, in order to make things better for our staff and our communities.

HMICFRS consider the Service 'Requires Improvement' in the way we look after our people. Our staff are at the heart of our organisation and although we need to do more to address some issues related to our people, the report highlights the good wellbeing arrangements we have in place to support our staff. Some of the considerations have already been highlighted through our own Culture Report and we are working towards addressing these.

We have identified that the difficulties we have faced in recruiting on-call firefighters has resulted in our availability not being as high as we would want it to be. We are focussing on promoting our recruitment campaign in our communities as a priority.

We are committed to improving diversity within our workforce and have recently appointed a dedicated Positive Action Co-ordinator to support us in this area, something that we are also focussing on in our recruitment campaign

You can read the latest HMICFRS Inspection report in full [here](#).

Our Progress

4 Priority 4: Service reform

To ensure we are effective, efficient and able to transform the Service to meet the challenges we face we said we would:

“A fire and rescue service for tomorrow”
(Staffordshire Commissioner)

-  Invest in our people by providing them with the right equipment, training and skills to keep them safe, encourage innovation and inspire our future leaders
-  Continue to strive to improve the services we provide
-  Be honest and open, encouraging people to be themselves and treat each other with kindness and respect
-  Promote a positive and supportive culture committed to improving the health, fitness and wellbeing of our people
-  Work with our communities and partners to improve the diversity of our workforce

What we have done and what we plan to do

New management structure
The formal notice of retirement of one of the Service’s Directors presented an opportunity for the Service to redefine the roles and structure within the senior leadership team to create a more efficient and effective management structure and more flexible pathway for the development of staff into senior roles.

The Service has operated with one of leanest Senior Leadership Team structures in the UK Fire and Rescue Services since 2011 and it has been reviewed on four occasions between 2011 and 2019. The number of senior posts and roles has reduced on each occasion. It is important to note that the Service chose not to introduce the role of Area Managers into the Service when the sector engaged in a national transition from rank to role structures in 2004 instead opting to employ a board of Directors.

It is acknowledged that this structure meant a significant gap in responsibilities, terms and conditions from a Group Manager up to a Director (which is an Assistant Chief Fire Officer - ACFO).

Many similar services operate with a structure of a single ACFO role combined with a number of Area Managers beneath (at least one Area Manager in those structures has the additional responsibility of Strategic Command to support the Gold (XP) rota). This has proven to be effective and offers a route of succession from Group Manager, to Area Manager, to Principal Officer Level with Strategic Command responsibilities. It also means that other Area Manager roles within the organisation do not have to have an operational responsibility. The benefit of this is that it opens the positions to a broader talent pool for recruitment and selection purposes and brings new skills into the Service.

Therefore, one of the ACFO posts has been

removed from the organisation. Moving from seven Group Managers to five and developing three Area Manager Positions (only one of which is required to have operational competence). This fulfils the needs of the strategic operational rota, whilst providing opportunities for non-operational colleagues to operate at the senior leadership level, which is again something that has been raised through our cultural survey.

This new structure is less costly than the current structure, but importantly provides additional capacity and supports service delivery. These changes are intended to ensure that the Service has a robust structural framework to deliver the **Safety Plan** and all of our statutory duties. At the same time, the changes are intended to support all of our people in the Service, to ensure that they can flourish within each of their teams and their individual roles.

Service Transformation Programme
The Service’s Transformation Programme is managed by the Deputy Chief Fire Officer and is aligned to the **Safety Plan** (Service Reform) and the Commissioner’s Fire Plan 2021-2024 under the two priorities of having a flexible and responsive service as well as a fire service for tomorrow. The focus of the Transformation Board’s work will be on response, crewing reform and prevention and protection reform with work streams developing a number of options to make the service financially sustainable for future years.

Code of Ethics
In May 2021 the **Fire Standards Board** published the **Code of Ethics** which is to be

adopted by every fire and rescue service in England. The code, reflects best practice principles and has been designed to underpin the way we serve our communities, carry out our role and work together.

The Code of Ethics is easy to understand and is broken down into five ethical principles which are designed to help us improve our culture and workforce diversity:

- Putting our communities first
- Integrity
- Dignity and respect
- Leadership
- Equality, diversity and inclusion

The Core Code is closely aligned to our existing Cultural Framework and values which already focus on valuing our people, diversity and improvement and putting service to our communities at the heart of everything we do.

One of the key priorities in our Safety Plan is to **maintain public confidence and trust in the Service**. This relies on each and every one of us demonstrating sound ethical behaviours. We will continue to explore how we can enhance and incorporate the Core Code of Ethics into our values, behaviours and policies across the Service. A review of policies is being undertaken and a gap analysis is being developed so we can determine where we need to amend, change or introduce new guidance on the core code. A new LearnPro module was developed to support everyone’s understanding of the Core Code of Ethics and set out the Service’s expectations.

Our Progress

Culture sessions and report

By the end of the summer everyone had the opportunity to take part in one of our Cultural Sessions. The intention of these workshops was to have a conversation about a number of key issues and to gain an insight into how people were feeling and being treated within the workplace on a daily basis so we could fully understand how we can improve as an organisation.

In October 2021 we published the Culture Report, which is an in-depth review of the feedback provided by staff during the Culture Sessions. Following publication of the report the Service has embarked on a series of activities to look at how the culture can be improved further. Senior leaders have come together to analyse the report and look at how we can approach things differently and staff are encouraged to work within their teams and share ideas on how the culture in the Service can improve further or what they see as the opportunities to resolve the issues raised.

Statement of Intent

The Service's Statement of Intent was published as an acknowledgement that the Service, like all organisations, has its issues, but that we welcome people with both visible and invisible differences and hold all our staff to the highest standards in terms of supporting equality, diversity and inclusion. It sets out the Service position regarding inappropriate behaviours and is not intended to stifle, but to encourage constructive conversations around equality, diversity and inclusion within teams. It is designed to support our staff in terms of being able to raise issues and concerns regarding inappropriate behaviours. This statement linked with the Core Code of Ethics are key aspects of the Service's approach to cultural change.

A diverse, healthy, and highly professional workforce

Concerns were raised through the cultural survey as well as through a number of other

channels to suggest that capacity within the shared Human Resources (HR) department has been an issue. As a result a Head of HR (for Fire only) has been recruited, providing additional capacity and dedicated focus on the people planning aspect of HR that is required within fire.

The shared HR function is developing a new Workforce Strategy which will set out how we will continue to work towards our Safety Plan priority of 'Developing a diverse, healthy, and highly professional workforce who are motivated and empowered to improve our Service.' We will be making sure that we are working with police colleagues in this area to ensure that we are engaging with all of our communities and creating the understanding that the fire and rescue service is a career choice for all.

The Service has become a corporate member of **Women in the Fire Service**. Since its formation, the membership has sought to influence the equality agenda, engaging with the major fire and rescue service players in order to have the voice of all women working in the fire and rescue service heard.

The Insights and Engagement Team will be working with their police counterparts in order to focus upon improving the equality, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) within the Service. HMICFRS has recognised that the sector needs to improve significantly in this area and we want to be a forward-thinking organisation with regard to this area of work. In addition, there were many comments made via the culture review regarding EDI and as such, we will be investing time and effort to improve our collective understanding.

Looking after our own mental health and wellbeing

We are currently exploring ways of improving the wellbeing of our staff. These include but are not limited to:

- Mental health support and advice – to

- improve our understanding of mental health issues in the workplace and how to support colleagues who may be struggling
- Health and fitness – having a single point of contact on each watch or in each team to support colleagues
- Developing outside areas at each location for people to relax in or have outdoor meetings which will also support our new Environmental Strategy at the same time
- Staff networks to provide safe spaces and support for a wide variety of groups.

Mind, The Royal Foundation, The Ambulance Staff Charity, The Fire Fighters Charity, and Police Care UK have launched **Blue Light Together** – a brand new website designed to support emergency responders. We told our staff about the new hub via our internal iNews publication. The independent site offers specialised information and resources around looking after your mental health and wellbeing.

To support the wellbeing of our staff flu vaccination clinics were held at fire HQ, Burslem, Cannock, Lichfield fire stations and police headquarters. These were open to both fire and police colleagues, offering free flu vaccinations, in a bid to protect the health of our people during the flu season.

Firefighter recruitment

In April 2021 we hosted the passing out parade for our whole-time firefighter apprentice course 2020/21. With the COVID restrictions the event needed to use a very different approach to ensure the safety of everyone involved. The event consisted of an inspection, followed by the presentation of certificates and the awards for breathing apparatus, rescue and the silver axe. It is important to recognise the efforts, commitments and hard work of all the instructors and the team at Learning and Development who delivered the course for 18 new firefighters at a time when the pandemic meant we had to rethink the way in which the entire course was delivered. Running two separate syndicates in different locations with all the logistics that took was an incredible achievement.

The next phase of our whole-time/competent on-call transfer process started towards the

end of August 2021. The whole-time course started in September, with a number of competent on-call firefighters being placed straight out on stations.

Role of a firefighter

In November, we encouraged our staff to take part in the NFCC's consultation on the Job Description and Person Specification for the role of a firefighter. This consultation included a Job Description and Person Specification for the core role of a firefighter, as well as information regarding service-specific duties and guidance on how these might be dealt with where appropriate. We recognise the importance of participating as our responses will help to shape the document and enable the NFCC to deliver a quality product endorsed and supported by the wider fire and rescue service sector.

Collaborative shared services and estates

Since the change to single governance, collaboration between Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Service, Staffordshire Police and the Staffordshire Commissioner's Office has realised significant savings, totalling over £1m per annum through initiatives such as:

- combining shared enabling services (core HR, Finance, Estates, Communications and Procurement) (Shared Services)
- shared use of estate buildings and stations
- single procurement processes to leverage economies of scale in purchasing.

The COVID pandemic had a significant impact on shared services due to the need to maintain organisational business as usual to all customers and organisational effort being concentrated on the pandemic response. As we emerge from COVID all parties have a renewed commitment to drive continual reform, improvement and efficiency from the current shared services arrangements. This work started in 2021 with a review of occupational health and will be extended to all shared services in the 2022/23 financial year. These reviews will differ in intensity based on the relative changes since inception of each service, any concerns around value for money or performance as well as known changes in organisational landscape but will be evidence based.

At the centre of the Government's Fire Reform White Paper presented in May 2022 are plans to improve accountability by transferring fire governance to a single elected individual, overseeing delivery by operationally independent Chief Fire Officers in the same way as Staffordshire Police Force is a distinct legal entity from the Commissioner's Office. This may impact on the reviews being undertaken and as such will influence the order in which these reviews are undertaken, dependent upon the legislative outcome and direction of travel.

Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Service has a building portfolio consisting of 35 premises (21 of these being Private Financed Initiative (PFI) buildings). The PFI buildings are managed by the Shared Services Estates Team and building maintenance is outsourced to two contractors across the estate; Equans Facilities Management and Kier Facilities Management. The remaining 14 buildings are maintained by an in-house facilities management function within the Estates Team. The Estates Team have planned a major refurbishment programme for the residual buildings, which initially will see works carried out at Stafford and Abbots Bromley fire stations, then shortly after Brewood and Tutbury, with the intention of completing the entire programme by 2024. There is a continued programme of investment to make sure all our buildings are maintained to a standard and facilities are fit for purpose.

The Estates Team are working closely with the Staffordshire Commissioners Office to build upon the current successful collaborative building projects recently undertaken at Hanley and Tamworth which now sees the Service and Staffordshire Police working together and co-locating within the same buildings. The Estates Team are committed to utilising the building portfolio to explore

further collaborative opportunities between both fire and police as well as other public organisations. Shared services is more than just the local relationship between policing and fire. There remains an intent to provide the services where best suited based on organisational need as opposed to always seeking police and fire collaboration. We already share a control room with West Midlands Fire and Rescue Service, as well as having multi-service arrangements in place for items such as pension administration.

With Staffordshire Police changing its operating model to focus on local policing, moving policing closer to the communities they serve, it has been agreed to explore the feasibility of three further combined locations between police and fire at Uttoxeter, Kidsgrove and Stone. As this remains at the feasibility stage no firm commitment has yet been made. The benefits to the public purse of the shared locations at both Tamworth and Hanley (within Stoke on Trent) have provided both modern, fit for purpose accommodation to policing as well as generating capital receipts of circa. £2m and ongoing revenue savings in excess of £300k per annum across Police and Fire. Whilst the aforementioned site will not generate the same level of savings due to their relative size they will provide modern, fit for purpose policing facilities within those locations for future generations.

Enhanced Rescue Pumps

We took the decision to buy two new Enhanced Rescue Pumps (ERPs) as part of the replacement program for existing ageing vehicles and, from a decision made originating from our transformation programme, the removal from service of the current Rescue Tender from Longton. In essence, the new concept was combining a pump rescue ladder with a rescue tender, to form an enhanced rescue pump. The new ERPs will be located

at Stafford and Longton. The requirement for ERPs has been based on current and foreseeable risk within Staffordshire and the analysis of previous incidents attended to make sure that we can continue to provide a resilient operational response for incidents requiring technical rescue capabilities.

Following an extensive consultation and procurement process, and taking into account vehicle commissioning timescales, it is estimated that the ERPs chassis will arrive in Service mid-2023 and the appliance build will be complete by end 2023. The appliance will then be subject to a snagging and training period before being made operationally available.

The ERP's will be capable of attending all types of technical rescue incidents, but in addition to the current capability, crews will have specialist training and will be better equipped to carry out rescues from heavy goods vehicles and train carriages. Following discussions with our Learning and Development department, operational crews, other fire and rescue services and industry experts, our Emergency Response Team have been arranging station trials of equipment to assist in deciding on types of equipment best suited to dealing with technical rescue type incidents. New hydraulic rescue tools have been trialled along with an extensive list of new equipment.



Financial overview

The Staffordshire Commissioner is responsible for the finances of the Service with a net revenue budget of £41.977 million approved for 2021/22 on 15th February 2021. Revenue expenditure consists of the day-to-day running costs, such as employee costs, pension costs, premises, transport, ICT, income and financing costs.

The Staffordshire Commissioner manages the affairs of the Authority to ensure that proper arrangements are in place for delivering value for money through securing financial resilience and challenging how it secures economy, efficiency and effectiveness. Overall the financial performance of the Authority has been positive in year by delivering savings which has importantly supported the direct financing of capital expenditure and contributes to the increase in reserves.

During 2021/22, £0.4m was invested in capital projects, which is considerably less than the original budget approved for the year as the continued impact of the pandemic during the year has had some impact upon spend and the ability to deliver against the original programme, in addition to product availability in a challenging market place.

It is imperative that the Service continues to play a leading role in the communities we serve to ensure that Staffordshire remains one of the safest places to be. The Service is responsible for providing its services to a population of just over 1.14 million people in our communities across the county of Staffordshire and the City of Stoke-on-Trent. During the year ending 31 March 2022 we responded to 8,354 emergency incidents.

Accounting Statements

The **Annual Statement of Accounts** is published to present fairly the financial position and transactions of the Staffordshire

Commissioner (Fire and Rescue) Authority (the Authority) in a fair and transparent manner. Its format is prescribed by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA).

The main statements consist of:

- Statement of Responsibilities for the Statement of Accounts which sets out the responsibilities of the Authority and the Treasurer for the accounts;
- Annual Governance Statement which assesses the adequacy of the Authority's governance arrangements and identifies where improvements can be made;
- Statement of Accounting Policies which sets out the basis for recognising, measuring and disclosing transactions in the accounts;
- Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement which summarises income and expenditure on the Authority's services during 2020/21; and presents all the recognised gains and losses of the Authority during 2020/21;
- Movement in Reserves Statement which reconciles the Income and Expenditure Account with General Fund Balances taking into account contributions to reserves committed for future expenditure;
- Balance Sheet which sets out the Authority's financial position as at 31 March 2021; and
- Cash Flow Statement that summarises the inflows and outflows of cash in the year.

The Statement of Accounts is available on our website at: www.staffordshirefire.gov.uk

Printed copies can be obtained by contacting our Finance team on **0300 330 1000**.

FINANCIAL CHALLENGE

2022/23 The Staffordshire Commissioner Fire and Rescue Authority's budget has been approved for the financial year beginning April 1 2022.

The Budget for 2022/23

£42.5m

made up of :

68%

£28.8m from Council Tax Paid by the 355,100 properties of Staffordshire

£13.7m

in Business Rates and Revenue Support Grant

COUNCIL TAX

£1.55

per week is the average per residential property (Band D)

£80.35

PER YEAR

We need to deliver savings of £2m through improved efficiency and better productivity.

Workstreams aligned to Service reform are all developed through the Transformation Board which will ensure a Service Fit for Tomorrow in line with the Commissioner's priorities.

DEMANDS

Our significant budget pressures into the medium term are:

Pension Costs

Pay Awards

Cost increases in areas such as utilities

How is the budget spent?

| Income | Amount |
|-------------------------|---------------|
| • Council Tax | £28.8m |
| • Business Rates | £8.7m |
| • Revenue Support Grant | £5.0m |
| Total | £42.5m |

| Expenditure | Amount |
|---|---------------|
| • Wholetime Firefighters Pay | £15.6m |
| • Premises Transport and Other Services | £8.3m |
| • On-Call Firefighters Pay | £5.6m |
| • Fire Staff Pay | £5.6m |
| • Capital Financing Costs | £5.2m |
| • Other Pay Costs | £2.2m |
| Total | £42.5m |

IMPACT OF COVID

The Service received a grant of **£1.1m** from the Home Office in order to deal with the impact of COVID, some funds remain available to support any additional costs incurred for 2022/23 and to continue with costs associated with a more agile approach to working.



Response



- 8404** total incidents ↑ **UP 4%** from last year
- 726** road traffic collisions ↑ **UP 33%** from last year
- 440** accidental house fires ↓ **DOWN 15%** from last year
- 1635** small outdoor fires ↓ **DOWN 9%** from last year
- 3** accidental house fire deaths **NO CHANGE** from last year
- 25** accidental house fire injuries ↑ **UP 25%** from last year
- 155** accidental business fires ↑ **UP 27%** from last year
- 48** deliberate business fires ↑ **UP 37%** from last year



Protection



6 Enforcement Notices and **7** Prohibition Notices issued

400 telephone fire safety audits

730 full fire safety audits were carried out on those premises deemed most at risk

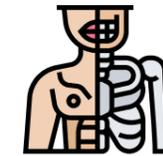
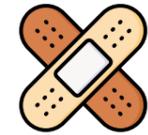


Health and Safety

Injuries up to **37**, in comparison to **26** the previous year.

Breakdown:

- 7** struck against object
- 4** manual handling
- 4** slip, trip or fall
- 13** struck by object
- 2** fall from height
- 4** musculoskeletal
- 2** entrapment
- 2** other



Prevention

3,583 Safe and Well visits * ↓ **DOWN 13.6%** from last year



Human Resources

Recruited:

- 23** on-call firefighters
- 18** wholtime firefighters
- 20** support staff



Finance

Budget set at **£42m**, actual spend was **£40.9m**.



£1.1m saved

*Due to Covid-19 restrictions only high priority Safe and Well visits were carried out.

What do you think of our Statement of Assurance?

We welcome any views you may have on the content of this Statement of Assurance. If you have any feedback, thoughts or suggestions, or if you would like to take part in future consultations please let us know.

Planning for the future

Our current Safety Plan covers the period 2020-24. We will soon be starting work on developing our next Safety Plan and it is important that we seek the views of our communities when doing so. We would love to hear from individuals, partners and local community groups who would be interested in helping us to shape the future of Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Service by taking part in consultation about our future plans.

If you would like to share your views with us about our Statement of Assurance, or if you would like to take part in future consultation please email us at consultation@staffordshirefire.gov.uk, or visit our website at www.staffordshirefire.gov.uk where you will find links to further information about our services and activities.

Interested in helping us by becoming an on-call firefighter?

On-call firefighters are part-time, paid firefighters who provide emergency response to the same emergencies as our whole-time firefighters. They often have a primary job and fit in their role as an on-call firefighter around their main employment. They can respond to an emergency from either their home or work.



Alerter goes off

If an emergency is called in during their on-call period, they will be notified by their alerter.



Go to fire station

They will then make their way to their local fire station, whether this is from their home or work.



Respond to emergency

When at the station, they will then kit up, get in the fire engine and respond to the emergency.

As well as responding to emergencies, on-call firefighters can also get involved in community fire safety initiatives in their local area, including carrying out Safe and Well visits and school visits.

On-call firefighters are a crucial part of our fire service as they provide an efficient and effective emergency service to the communities of Staffordshire. We are recruiting on-call firefighters, so if you are interested in becoming an on-call firefighter in your local area, you can find more details and apply online via the careers section of our website staffordshirefire.gov.uk/careers

Contact

Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Service Headquarters
Pirehill
Stone
Staffordshire
ST15 0BS



STAFFORDSHIRE POLICE, FIRE AND CRIME PANEL

24 October 2022

WORK PROGRAMME PLANNING 2022-23

Report of the Secretary

Recommendation

That the Panel note the dates of future meetings and considers the contents of its future Work Programme.

Background

By Regulation this Panel is required to meet on a *minimum* of 4 occasions each year with the facility to convene additional meetings as and when required.

There are a number of reports/matters which the Panel is required to consider:

Police and Crime Matters: the proposed Policing and Crime Precept each year, the Police and Crime Plan, The Commissioners Annual Report on the delivery of the Plan, Confirmation Hearings for a number of key posts and Reports on the Handling of Complaints.

Fire and Rescue Service Matters: The proposed Fire and Rescue Service Precept each year, the draft Fire and Rescue Plan/Corporate Safety Plan (incorporating the Integrated Risk Management Plan), the Annual Statement of Assurance and Confirmation Hearings for key posts in the Service.

| Panel Meeting date | Agenda Items |
|----------------------------------|---|
| Monday 27 June 2022 (2.pm) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appointment of Chairman • Appointment of Vice-Chairman • Annual Report on the Management of Complaints and Conduct Matters against the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner and Deputy Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner • Home Officer Grant 2021/22 • Consideration of the Commissioners Annual Report 2022/23 • Questions from members of the public |
| Monday 26 September 2022 (10 am) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Police and Crime Plan / Fire and Rescue Plan Update • Road Safety Partnership Update – Deputy Commissioner • Questions from members of the public |

| | |
|--|---|
| Monday 24 October 2022 (2.pm) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MTFs/Budget Update – Policing Service • MTFs/Budget Update - Fire and Rescue Service (To include transformation plan update as requested 140222) • Fire and Rescue Annual Assurance Statement |
| 6 February 2023 (2.pm) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PFCC's proposed Police Budget and Precept 2023/24 • Police Misconduct and Complaint Regulations 2020 – annual report |
| 13 February 2023 (2.pm) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consideration of the PFCCs proposed Fire and Rescue Budget and Precept 2023/24 • Fire and Rescue Service Safety Plan 2020-2024 Update Report |
| 21 February 2023 (10am) <i>(Reserved date if needed)</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If required, Further consideration of proposed Police and/or Fire and Rescue Budget and Precept 2023/24 |
| Monday 24 April 2023 (2.pm) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TBA |
| Items to be scheduled if/when appropriate | |
| Proposed Operation Hub / Firearms Range | An Informal meeting has been arranged for 2 November 2022 |
| Neighbourhood policing - review | Raised at 23 September meeting |
| First quarter performance report – email to Members (including risks and mitigation) | Requested at 31 Jan 2022 precept meeting. These are available for members and the public to view on line. Meetings are webcast and open to the public to attend. |
| Police PEEL inspection report | Additional meeting – invite Safeguarding O&S Committee (Community Safety) date TBC |

J Tradewell (Secretary to the Panel)
Contact Officers: Mandy Pattinson
mandy.pattinson@staffordshire.gov.uk