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Staffordshire Police, Fire and Crime Panel

Monday 13 November 2023

10:00

Oak Room, County Buildings, Stafford

The meeting will be webcast live and archived for 12 months. It can be viewed at the following link: <https://staffordshire.public-i.tv/core/portal/home>

John Tradewell
Secretary to the Panel
3 November 2023

Agenda

1. **Apologies**
2. **Declarations of interest**
3. **Minutes of the meeting held on 10 October 2023** (Pages 1 - 8)
4. **Decisions published by the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner (PFCC)**

No decisions have been published on the Commissioners website since the last meeting.
5. **Questions to the PFCC from Members of the Public** (Pages 9 - 16)

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>

6. **MTFS Budget update -Policing Services** (Pages 17 - 26)
7. **MTFS Budget update - Fire and Rescue Services** (Pages 27 - 38)
8. **Fire and Rescue Annual Assurance Statement 2022-23** (Pages 39 - 62)
9. **Questions to the PFCC by Panel Members**
10. **Dates of Future Meetings and Work Programme** (Pages 63 - 64)
11. **Exclusion of the Public**

The Chairman to move:

“That the public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business which involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in the paragraphs of Part 1 of Schedule 12A (as amended) of Local Government Act 1972 indicated below”.

Part Two

(All reports in this section are exempt)

Membership	
Charlotte Atkins	Staffordshire Moorlands
Adrian Bowen	Co-optee
Richard Cox (Vice-Chair)	Lichfield District Council
Jo Elson	Cannock Chase District Council
Gill Heesom	Newcastle-under-Lyme District Council
Zdzislaw Krupski	East Staffordshire
Angela Loughran	Stafford Borough Council
Daniel Maycock	Tamworth Borough Council
Vince Merrick	South Staffordshire
Bernard Peters (Chair)	Staffordshire County Council
David Williams	Stoke-on-Trent City Council

Notes 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.



Minutes of the Staffordshire Police, Fire and Crime Panel Meeting held on 10 October 2023

Present: Bernard Peters (Chair)

Attendance	
Charlotte Atkins	Dan Maycock
Adrian Bowen	Vince Merrick
Richard Cox (Vice-Chair)	Keith Walker
Gill Heesom	Jenny Barron (Substitute)

Apologies: Michael Fitzpatrick and Angela Loughran

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

Part One

14. Declarations of interest

No declarations were made at the meeting.

15. Minutes of the two meetings held on 3 July 2023

Resolved: That the minutes of the two Panel meetings, both held on the 3 July be approved and signed by the Chairman.

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

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

Resolved: The decisions were noted.

17. 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 which was included in the agenda pack.

With the consent of the Chairman, Mr Riley was allowed to comment on the Commissioners written response and ask a supplementary question. Mr Riley commented that a Freedom of Information (FOI), as directed in the Commissioners response, would provide him with information but not the public and this was not transparent.

Mr Riley's supplementary question was:

If the Police force is only required to record offender ethnicity, would the Commissioners office direct the Chief Constable to collect data on foreign nationals, so that the general public could see the impact on the local communities?"

The Commissioner responded that he did hold performance meetings with the Chief Constable in public and this type of data was available on his web site. If there were areas of data which it was felt were missing, he would consider adding them to the data pack which accompanied the meeting. The Commissioner confirmed that the Chief Constable had operational independence and the data on foreign nationals was not required to be collected. The Commissioner commented that this may be a better question to MP's or the Home Secretary who had influence over legislation and what is required to be recorded.

The Commissioner commented that the areas where Staffordshire and Stoke on Trent housed migrants were not currently areas of concern or challenge for the force locally.

Resolved: The questions asked, and the Commissioners response were noted.

18. Police and Crime Plan - Update

The Commissioner introduced his report which provided the Panel with an update on the Police and Crime Plans progress. The report set out the Commissioners priorities designed to 'Keep Staffordshire Safe.'

Following the Commissioners introduction, the Panel asked questions and the following information was gathered. This was in addition to that provided in the written report:

- Misconduct of officers was taken very seriously by all concerned. The Chief Constable had confirmed his commitment to ensure high standards of behaviour in the force at the recent Commissioners performance meeting.
- The pilots for the 'Right Care, Right Person' national initiative, which was due to be implemented in 2024, were being monitored and discussions taking place locally with all relevant partners. It was acknowledged that the Police were not leading on this initiative, and that communication between all services was key if the changes were to be implemented effectively. which regards to the public perception survey, it was acknowledged that more detailed data was needed to demonstrate the context of some of the increases. The Commissioner informed the panel that his performance meetings with the Chief Constable and the accompanying information pack did contain more information. This could be found on the Commissioners website. Comparison information with other forces

- and local geographical area differences would be useful.
- Both Male and Female victims of domestic violence were treated by the Victim and Witness Support Service. Safe accommodation was now a responsibility of local authorities.
 - Newcastle's safer streets initiative was welcomed as a success in the town.
 - There was a feeling in some localities that anti-social behaviour was not reducing and the neighbourhood policing strategy was not as effective as it could be. The Commissioner agreed that perception was an issue. The 'hot spot' visible patrolling pilots, particularly in town centres would be monitored and if successful would continue.
 - Reducing delays in the court system was seen as a priority.
 - When asked which areas needed to be improved, the Commissioner confirmed that; out of court disposals could be better; 101 call averages were not yet satisfactory; and there were concerns that vehicle crime, particularly in the south of the county, could be reduced.
 - Speed cameras were being rotated and new digital cameras being installed. These were part of a much wider list of road safety enforcement methods used to keep roads safe.
 - The Commissioner was not aware of disability hate crime being an area for concern, but he agreed to look into it.
 - Catch 22 was acknowledged as a positive support group but more 'safe' places for interviews were needed.
 - The Officer uplift programme was ahead of schedule. Officer experience was highlighted as an area of concern due to the age of new recruits. This was being addressed by ensuring that senior officers had both the time to support and guide new recruits.
 - Knife bins and bleed packs were viewed as a welcomed success initiative.

Resolved:

- a) That the Police and Crime update report be noted and that further performance information be sent to members when the Chief Constable and Commissioner performance meeting was next held.

19. Fire and Rescue Service Safety Plan - Update

The Commissioner introduced his report which provided the Panel with an update on the Fire and Rescue Service Safety Plan which included the Integrated Risk Management Plan. The report set out the Commissioners priorities and progress to date.

Following the Commissioners introduction, the Panel asked questions and the following information was gathered. This was in addition to that provided in the written report:

- The Commissioner confirmed that the three person crewing trail would continue to be monitored. He confirmed that he was interested in what was right for Staffordshire not the views from elsewhere in the country.
- The roving appliance project had been viewed positively.
- Diversity of the work force would take a little time to change as recruitment took place when people retired or left the service. It was important that opportunities were well promoted and that the environment encouraged diversity. Detailed figures would be brought to the next meeting.
- Staff attending falls in the community were trained and supported by appropriate expert advice when necessary.
- The Commissioner would scrutinise that home fire safety visits were taking place to ensure all geographical areas were coverage and compare the data to pre covid figures.
- Community Fire stations could be used for community use wherever possible. If Police services did co-locate with Fire services, the community may be relocated but support and assistance would be given to help them find an alternative venue.
- Building regulation and other performance data was discussed in public with the Chief Fire Officer at the performance meetings with the Commissioner. The next was due in December. The Commissioner agreed that more context was needed around the figures to ensure that the number of inspections/enforcement notices etc was comparable to other areas or what was expected for a county of this size.
- A review of the use of Volunteers was taking place currently.

Resolved:

- a) That the Fire and Rescue Service safety plan update report was noted.
- b) Detailed figures of workforce diversity would be brought to the next meeting.

20. Questions to the PFCC by Panel Members

There was a question on a Tamworth By-election candidates post on social media, claiming that there would be a public facing desk at the local Police station. The Commissioner confirmed that MP's and election candidates could not make these decisions/claims, as they would be made by the Chief Constable in conjunction with the Commissioner.

21. Dates of Future Meetings and Work Programme

The Chairman informed the Panel that this would be Mr Walkers last meeting as independent co-optee. Mr Walker had been a member of the Panel since 2015 and had been a most valuable member during that time.

The Panels next meeting would be held on 13 November 2023.

Resolved:

- a) That Mr Walker be formally thanked for his service on the Panel over the past 8 years.
- b) That the work programme be noted.

Chair

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
6 Feb 2023 Questions raised by the Panel. Also discussed at 3 July meeting.	When would the incompatibility of technology be rectified? Reference was made to CCTV data from the District Councils which could not be downloaded by the police.	PFCC to respond	This matter is being considered by the Police. Ongoing	
10 October 2023. Police and Crime Plan - update	PFCC and Chief Constable performance information be emailed to panel members prior to performance meetings	MP	This will be emailed when available.	When available on the Commissioners website.
10 October 2023. Fire and Rescue Plan - update	Detailed figures on workforce diversity – next meeting	PFCC	Will be presented at next panel meeting	13 th November

Work Programme	Mr Walker be thanked for his service on the panel as independent Co-optee	Chairman		20 October 2023.

**STAFFORDSHIRE POLICE, FIRE AND CRIME PANEL –
13 NOVEMBER 2023**

**QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC TO THE POLICE, FIRE AND
CRIME COMMISSIONER**

Report of the Secretary

The Panel's Constitution provides for questions to the Commissioner from members of the public. Questioners can choose to either attend the meeting and ask the question themselves or have the question dealt with in written form and the reply forwarded to them.

The following question has been received (questions are listed in order of receipt):

Ms Mallender – Received October 2023

- 1) When was the last time The Chief Constable, Lead National police officer on Protest Policing and/or senior offices met with the local communities of Madeley, Whitmore, Swynnerton and other Staffordshire areas about the activities of HS2 concerning the apparent criminality involving HS2 thugs, (NET), police officers who turned blind eyes as members of the public were intimidated and/or assaulted by HS2 thugs, with further allegations surrounding fraud, organised crime and corruption surrounding HS2's work in Staffordshire. Can a series of meetings be arranged so Staffordshire Police can now be openly seen, in clear receipt, of the same information as the Serious Fraud Office and The United Nations Human Rights Watch Organisation on these issues? (Photos not attached).
- 2) To what extent has discriminatory arrest and/or prosecution supported by Staffordshire Police played its part, to assist alleged corruption by others committing Organised Waste Crime; when Staffordshire Police, stopped and stifled legitimate peaceful complaint and protest at Walleys Quarry and Who gave the discriminatory orders?

Mr Riley -Received October 2023

- 1) The commissioner mentioned on Octobers PCFC meeting stated that a public perception survey had taken place in July 2023. Where was the survey distributed to, so Staffordshire constituents could access it, and how many replied to the survey did the commissioners office receive?

- 2) The commissioner mentioned that the police uplift is set to exceed target and there would be 2,000, officers by March 2024, Since the uplift in targets and recruitment commenced, how many police officers will have been recruited in that period, and how many police officers have left the service in that time period?

Mr Read – October 2023

- 1) The Commissioner announced at the last meeting that he was purchasing a number of ANPR cameras, for installation at fixed and mobile locations. Will the Commissioner be publishing regular updates on the work of these cameras? For example, the number of offenders detected, fines issued, points awarded on licences, types of offences e.g. no road tax or insurance etc.

The Commissioner has been asked to provide a response at the meeting.

A copy of the reply will be forwarded to any questioner not in attendance at the meeting.

J Tradewell
Secretary to the Panel

Contact Officers: Mandy Pattinson
Mandy.pattinson@staffordshire.gov.uk

Police, Fire & Crime Panel – Public Question

Questions Posed:

1. When was the last time The Chief Constable, Lead National police officer on Protest Policing and/or senior offices met with the local communities of Madeley, Whitmore, Swynnerton and other Staffordshire areas about the activities of HS2 concerning the apparent criminality involving HS2 thugs, as seen below, police officers who turned blind eyes as members of the public were intimidated and/or assaulted by HS2 thugs, with further allegations surrounding fraud, organised crime and corruption surrounding HS2's work in Staffordshire. Can a series of meetings be arranged so Staffordshire Police can now be openly seen, in clear receipt, of the same information as the Serious Fraud Office and The United Nations Human Rights Watch Organisation on these issues? (word count 115) helpful photos to assist are below.

2. To what extent has discriminatory arrest and/or prosecution supported by Staffordshire Police played its part, to assist alleged corruption by others committing Organised Waste Crime; when Staffordshire Police, stopped and stifled legitimate peaceful complaint and protest at Walleys Quarry and Who gave the discriminatory orders? (word count 37)

Panel Member: Member of the Public

Question Date: 18.10.23

Commissioner Response:

Question 1

This is an operational policing matter. Any issues that are reported would be dealt with accordingly by the Local Policing Teams with specialist support where required. If anyone suspects criminal activity they can report through Staffordshire Police's reporting channels – by calling 101, or 999 in an emergency, or online at [Report | Staffordshire Police](#).

Question 2

Over a protracted period, Staffordshire Police has responded to reports of protest and aggravated trespass at Walley's Quarry. Peaceful protest will be supported; however, 14 arrests have been made in relation to the protests for a variety of offences.

13 of the 14 persons detained faced formal sanction after investigation and there is no evidence in the arrest details, or in formal complaints submitted by some of those detained persons, of corruption or discrimination on the part of Staffordshire Police.

Contact Officer

Author:	Louise Clayton
Position:	Chief Executive
Date:	20.06.23

Police, Fire & Crime Panel – Public Question

Questions Posed:

1. The commissioner mentioned on October's PCFC meeting stated that a public perception survey had taken place in July 2023. Where was the survey distributed to, so Staffordshire constituents could access it, and how many replied to the survey did the commissioner's office receive?
2. The commissioner mentioned that the police uplift is set to exceed target and there would be 2,000, officers by March 2024, Since the uplift in targets and recruitment commenced, how many police officers will have been recruited in that period, and how many police officers have left the service in that time period?

Panel Member: Member of the Public

Question Date: 23.10.23

Commissioner Response:

Question 1

The public survey is commissioned jointly by the Staffordshire Commissioner's Office and Staffordshire Police to understand levels of public confidence in the force together with attitudes towards effectiveness, engagement and residents' concerns. The survey in July/August was carried out by SMRS Research, an independent research agency, and consisted of telephone surveys with a representative sample of 1,600 residents across all nine authorities in Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent.

Public survey results are regularly discussed at the Commissioner's Public Performance Meeting with the Chief Constable. Video recordings of these meetings together with supporting papers can be found on the Commissioner's website at [Public Meetings - Staffordshire Commissioner \(staffordshire-pfcc.gov.uk\)](https://staffordshire-pfcc.gov.uk).

Question 2

Police uplift started part way through 2019, with the start of April used nationally for calculation purposes to measure the uplift in headcount.

Between 1st April 2019 and 31st October 2023, Staffordshire Police have had 1,058 police officers (1,056.75 FTE) join the service and 664 police officers (655.70 FTE) leave the service, a net increase of 394 officers.

All police workforce statistics, including numbers of starters and leavers by force area, are publicly available on the Home Office website at [Police workforce England and Wales statistics - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/police-workforce-england-and-wales-statistics). Progress against Uplift targets is regularly discussed at the Commissioner's Public Performance Meeting with the Chief Constable. Video recordings of these meetings together with supporting papers can be found on the Commissioner's website at [Public Meetings - Staffordshire Commissioner \(staffordshire-pfcc.gov.uk\)](https://staffordshire-pfcc.gov.uk/public-meetings).

Contact Officer

Author:	Louise Clayton
Position:	Chief Executive
Date:	27.10.23

Police, Fire & Crime Panel – Public Question

Questions Posed:

The Commissioner announced at the last meeting that he was purchasing a number of ANPR cameras, for installation at fixed and mobile locations. Will the Commissioner be publishing regular updates on the work of these cameras? For example, the number of offenders detected, fines issued, points awarded on licences, types of offences e.g. no road tax or insurance etc.

Panel Member: Member of the Public

Question Date: 26.10.23

Commissioner Response:

The investment in ANPR cameras will greatly increase pro-active opportunities to target offenders who utilise road networks across Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent to commit crime. Identification of new ANPR camera locations is intelligence lead, and will see an increase in camera coverage across the whole of Staffordshire.

Whilst specific data relating to operational activity is not published, the benefit of investing in Staffordshire's static and mobile ANPR camera network is regularly discussed at the Commissioner's Public Performance Meeting (PPM) with the Chief Constable. The next PPM will take place on 23rd January 2024. Video recordings of these meetings together with supporting papers can be found on the Commissioner's website at [Public Meetings - Staffordshire Commissioner \(staffordshire-pfcc.gov.uk\)](https://staffordshire-pfcc.gov.uk/public-meetings).

Contact Officer

Author:	Louise Clayton
Position:	Chief Executive
Date:	27.10.23



Item No. XX on Agenda

Report to the Police Fire and Crime Panel – 13th November 2023

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

Contact Officers:

John Bloomer
Director of Resources (S151 Officer for Staffordshire Police)
Telephone: 07974 204774

Katharine Ross
Director of Finance (S151 Officer for the Staffordshire Commissioner's Office)
Telephone: tbc

Executive Summary

- 1.1 This report provides an update to the Police, Fire and Crime Panel on the current MTFS covering the years 2023/24 to 2026/27 including an update on the fiscal landscape facing policing since the MTFS was approved and current year financial performance.
- 1.2 The MTFS for the period 2023/24 to 2026/27 was approved by the Staffordshire Commissioner following presentation to the Police, Fire and Crime Panel on 6th February 2023.
- 1.3 This MTFS report provides an update to the assumptions within the report and outlines key pressures facing the group.
- 1.4 As part of the budget process for 2024/25, the MTFS will continue to be updated, up until the budget proposal by the Commissioner (and endorsement of the precept for Policing and Crime by the Police, Fire and Crime Panel), on 5th February 2024.
- 1.5 A high-level timetable is included in this report, to lay out the necessary steps and key meetings to communicate the 2024/25 budgeting process and updated the MTFS.

The Budget Setting Process and Savings/Pressure Review

- 2.1 Financial and budget planning work is undertaken jointly with the Chief Constable to identify pressures and savings, as well as identifying areas for potential new investment in the policing model, should funding be available to do so.
- 2.2 The table below outlines the proposed budget timetable for the 2024/25 MTFS:

Date	Activity
August 2023	Review capital programme commences
August 2023	TOM v budget reconciliation and recalculation of pay budgets
September 2023	Revised MTFS position based on recalculation of pay budgets and known pressures/savings to date
September 2023	Command review of current MTFS
September 2023	Review inflation assumptions
September 2023	Review reserves position
w/c 2 nd October 2023	Resource Allocation Challenge panels (to present the pressures and flag any risks – this should be linked to FMS)
November	Resource Allocation Challenge panels (purpose being to determine areas of priority for review for next year)
13 th November 2023	Police Fire & Crime Panel – MTFS Update
Beginning of December 2023	Presentation of draft budget requirement to the Commissioner
December 2023	Refine detailed budgets
December 2023	Finalise capital programme
December 2023	Funding settlement
January 2024	Public Consultation regarding precept
Mid-January 2024	Final Council Tax Precept Positions from districts

January 2024	Draft Panel report – presentation to SGB (Finance Panel on 31/01/2024)
5 th February 2024	Police Fire & Crime Panel – Recommendation of the budget and precept decision

- 2.3 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.
- 2.4 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. This year the Force is piloting Priority Based Resourcing (PBR) reviews across a handful of areas to provide further scrutiny and greater understanding of use of resources.
- 2.5 Whilst from an overall net revenue budget of c.£250m per annum a savings challenge of £5m for 2024/25 represents 2% of that overall budget a number of constraints are placed on where savings can be found.
- Nationally police officer numbers are ringfenced (over 50% of the budget is spent just on police officer salaries)
 - Locally contact (call handlers) numbers are ringfenced.
 - The majority of non-pay costs are linked to headcount ergo by ringfencing headcount this ringfences this spend
 - Fees and charges are nationally set

The result of this is that savings have to be made on a much smaller base, with around 75% of the base budget ringfenced fully or in part. The reality is that with these constraints it is unavoidable that over the MTFS period Police Staff Headcount will need to be reduced and capital programmes contained to minimise increases in borrowing costs.

- 2.6 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 2,000fte
 - 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, average pay awards and state pension increases 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 where possible will be funded from internal borrowing only over the MTFS, in light of the current increased PWLB rates, except to manage short term cashflow,
 - The overall capital programme will not grow from the amounts allocated in the 2023/24 MTFS with new additions being offset by reductions elsewhere
 - The General Fund Reserve Balance will be maintained, where possible, to support the ability to internally borrow and provide stability

- Savings will be sought from increased efficiency; income generation or non-pay spend within Staffordshire Police and redundancies avoided where possible
- A commitment to avoid 'cost shunting' between local partners

Local Context and updated Financial Position 2023/24

- 3.1 Staffordshire Police continue to be subject to an 'engaged' phase of monitoring by His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary, Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) based on their inspection that reported in September 2022. This has necessitated investment into the policing model and an update of this is provided within this paper. However, the inspectorate remains of the view that strong progress is being made in addressing these issues.
- 3.2 Whilst responding to the concerns of HMICFRS remains an area of focus the Commissioner has also supported investment in to, and secured additional funding for, areas that the public have told him are important to making Staffordshire a great place to live, work and visit. These investments since the budget was presented to panel on the 6th February 2023 are:
- The recruitment of 25 additional staff into the Contact Centre on a temporary basis and an additional 5 on a permanent basis;
 - Temporary Audit and Assurance posts to support service improvement;
 - Recruitment of transferees, bringing experience at pace into Staffordshire Police to complement our existing recruitment of student officers;
 - Retention payments to detectives given the national shortage of detectives;
 - Investment into vetting to reduce both vetting waiting times, thus speeding up recruitment, as well as to support the Force in ensuring its people meet the highest standards that the public rightfully expect;
 - Moving the Staffordshire Roads Policing Unit to a 24/7 basis.
- 3.3 The Group (Commissioner and Staffordshire Police) outturn forecast for the current year at the end of Quarter 2 is £242.472m. This is a positive variance of £0.476m (0.20%) against the annual net revenue budget of £242.947m.
- 3.4 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.

Review of MTFS 2023/24

- 4.1 Both the Commissioner and Staffordshire Police are reviewing current planned revenue savings, 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% inflation rate in 24/25 in line with expectation in the October 2021 budget. With the Consumer Prices Index (CPI) running at 6.7% 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 pay award for September 2023 was higher than budgeted, which has had an on-going impact to future years. In addition, given the uncertainty regarding the level of pay awards in future years, the 2024/25 assumption has been increased from 2% to 3% and 2% thereafter in line with future inflation estimates.
- Staffordshire's anticipated share of the 2024/25 pay award grant has been included, which is expected to part-fund the additional costs in the year. The table below shows pay pressures compared to the original MTFS assumption totalling £8.1m that are offset by a pay award grant of £7.8m – this leaves a variance of £0.3m that requires local funding.

4.2 The table below shows the forecast movement in the MTFS position since the MTFS was set in February 2023 for the changes indicated above:

	2024/25 £m	2025/26 £m	2026/27 £m
Underlying position (after use of earmarked reserves)	(3.4)	(4.5)	(5.5)
<i>Reserve movements</i>	3.4	0.1	0.0
Reported budget gap February 2023	0.0	(4.4)	(5.5)
<i>Reverse assumed use of reserves</i>	(3.4)	(0.1)	0.0
<i>Pay pressures (para 4.1)</i>	(8.1)	(8.1)	(8.3)
<i>Pay award grant (para 4.1)</i>	7.8	7.8	7.8
<i>Rank & supervisory mix (para 4.6)</i>	(1.3)	(1.3)	(1.4)
<i>Pay review (increase from 2% to 3% in 24/25 and increased incremental drift)</i>	(1.2)	(3.3)	(5.7)
<i>Changes to capital financing (para 4.12)</i>	0.5	0.0	0.0
<i>Other emerging savings (para 4.12)</i>	0.7	0.7	0.8
<i>Other emerging pressures</i>	(0.6)	(0.6)	(0.5)
<i>Non-pay inflation review (increase from 2% to 3% in 24/25)</i>	(0.2)	(0.1)	0.2
Revised (Gap)	(5.8)	(9.4)	(12.6)

4.3 The table below shows the changes in assumptions based on the MTFS set in February 2023, compared to the changes assumed in the table above:

Category		2024/25 %	2025/26 %	2026/27 %
Pay award	MTFS	2.00	2.00	2.00
	Revised	3.00	2.00	2.00
General non-pay inflation	MTFS	2.00	2.00	2.00
	Revised	3.00	2.00	2.00

- 4.4 The majority of the increase in gap has been driven by factors outside of the Commissioner's control, namely around a higher inflationary environment.
- 4.5 Projecting forward, inflation assumptions will be more challenging over the coming MTFS period than historically has been the case. This heightened risk underpins the Commissioners approach to maintaining a general fund reserve with a minimum balance of 3% of the net revenue budget.
- 4.6 The pay pressure reflects significant investment in transferees (c.50 FTE) and rank mix; this is a result of the need to stand-up specialist investment areas such as the Public Protection Unit at pace. Alongside this, the challenges in recruiting to staff roles has resulted in offers increasingly being made at the top of the grade result in additional pressure versus budgeted assumption of vacant posts being at the bottom of the scale. In addition, whilst the pay award grant is welcome, it does not cover the full cost of the pay award in future years due to issues such the compounding effect of the uplift intakes moving through what are now grades that are 7% higher is not funded.
- 4.7 It has been assumed that the Home Office will fund any pay award above 3%, as has been the case in 2023/24.
- 4.8 The position shown above assumes a precept increase of 2.99%, which equates to a £7.79 increase on a band D property, which is what was assumed in the approved MTFS in February 2023.
- 4.9 If the full flexibility on the precept of 3.84%, which equates to £10 per annum for a band D property was agreed for the remainder of the MTFS, this would reduce the budget gap by £0.808m in 24/25.
- 4.10 In 2023/24 the maximum precept increase permissible was 5.76%, which equates to £15 per annum for a band D property. If this option was available and exercised in 2024/25 this would reduce the estimated budget gap by a further £1.829m.
- 4.11 The 2023/24 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.
- 4.12 Whilst using the budget support reserve remains available to use over the life of the MTFS the usage of the reserve needs to be balanced against a number of factors. These factors include using the reserve to smooth out the incremental savings requirement, allowing for targeted one off investment, or to continue to address the challenge of moving the Force away from an 'engaged' phase of monitoring.
- 4.13 Additional new permanent savings identified to date and reflected in the table above are a review of the capital programme (£0.497m), insurance (£0.167m), ROCU (£0.347m). Work continues to in relation to identifying further savings opportunities to close the budget gap, with savings targets given to Command leads in the Force of c.£1.8m.

- 4.14 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.
- 4.15 In addition to the pressures indicated in the above, there are pressures arising on a number of contracts, namely Healthcare in Custody and interpreters' services.

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 (SR21) was set out alongside the Chancellor's budget announcements on the 27th October 2021; the 2024/25 MTFS will be the final year of this period. For core grant funding, it is assumed that Staffordshire will receive its share of an additional £150m to Policing. In 2025/26, it is assumed that core funding will increase by 2% and by 2.5% thereafter.
- 5.3 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 Spending Review indicated precept flexibility of £10 per annum which is approximately 3.84% in 2024/25. The Commissioner will balance the needs of policing for additional funding against the ability of Staffordshire residents to afford the policing precept.
- 5.5 The impact of recent economic challenges on our council tax base is unknown. An assumption of a 1.5% increase in the council tax base is included within the position as well as a surplus on the collection fund of £0.650m.
- 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.

Inflation Assumptions and Sensitivity

- 6.1 Once again, the MTFS refresh is being undertaken in an uncertain environment as a result of the cost of living crisis and levels of high inflation.
- 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 2023/24 MTFS:

Description	2023/24 Budget	2024/25 Estimate	2025/26 Estimate	2026/27 Estimate
<u>Police Officers</u>				
Pay Award	3.0%	2.0%	2.0%	2.0%
Incremental uplift	1.0%	1.0%	1.0%	1.0%
Pension Contribution	31.0%	31.0%	31.0%	31.0%
<u>Police Staff</u>				
Pay Award	3.0%	2.0%	2.0%	2.0%
Incremental uplift	1.0%	1.0%	1.0%	1.0%
Pension Contribution	21.5%	21.5%	21.5%	21.5%
<u>Non Pay Inflation</u>				
General	4.0%	2.0%	2.0%	2.0%
Utilities & Fuel*	54%	2.0%	2.0%	2.0%
<u>Funding & Income</u>				
Government Funding	1.95%	1.50%	2.0%	2.5%
Council Tax Base Increase	1.46%	1.5%	1.5%	1.5%
Variable Income Charges	2.0%	2.0%	2.0%	2.0%
Council Tax Precept Increase	4.83%	2.99%	2.99%	2.99%

* % increase stated is an average across

budgets

- 6.4 Consumer Prices Inflation is running at 6.7% as at August 2023, which is higher than the 4% assumed in the MTFS for 2023/24.
- 6.5 In addition to this CPI rate the rate experienced in certain business areas is significantly in excess of this. For example, increases in the cost of outsourced forensic work is currently between 10% and 20% dependent on category and provider.
- 6.6 The non-pay inflation assumption for 2024/25 has been revised from 2% to 3%. Current estimates indicate that inflation will remain at high levels, falling to around 5% by the end of 2023. It is then expected to keep falling and reach the Bank of England's 2% target in the first half of 2025.
- 6.7 The current MTFS assumes pay awards at 2% per annum for 2024/25. For planning purposes, the assumption reflected in this MTFS update is an increase to 3% in line with non-pay inflation.
- 6.8 For indicative purposes, the table below from the 2023/24 MTFS highlights the impact of changes to the MTFS position:

Cost Area	Change	£'000
Police Pay	1%	1,171
PCSO/Police Staff	1%	748
Utilities	1%	28
Vehicle costs	1%	41
Supplies & Services	1%	97
Police Pension Contribution	1%	780
Police Core Grant Funding	1%	1,299
Precept	£1	360
Council Taxbase	1%	939

Capital

- 7.1 As part of the current MTFS refresh, capital plans across both Staffordshire Police and the Commissioner's Office are being refreshed.
- 7.2 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 2024/25 capital programme.
- 7.3 The Commissioner will repay £1.6m of loans funded by the Public Works Loans Board (PWLB) in the 2023/24 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.
- 7.4 External debt, held in the form of Public Works Loans Board (PWLB) debt has decreased for five years in a row. With the above £1.6m repayment this is forecast to fall for a sixth year in a row this year.
- 7.5 In light of the current increased PWLB rates, the planning assumption is that the capital programme will be funded from internal borrowing only over the MTFS, except to manage short term cashflow.
- 7.6 In contrast to recent years, the external environment in relation to investment income now represents an opportunity for additional investment income. The Bank of England base rate has risen to 5.25% with investment returns now at or above this benchmark.
- 7.7 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.
- 7.8 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.
- 7.9 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.£0.750m of new investment income to offset some of the pressures the group is facing.

Reserves

- 8.1 The General Fund reserve is £9.489m, which is 3.91% of the net revenue budget in line with the Commissioner's Reserves Strategy, with no forecast draw on this reserve in year anticipated.
- 8.2 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.
- 8.3 A budget support reserve was established in 2021/22. The projected balance of this at the year-end is £5.266m following budgeted use of £0.361m in 2023/24 and transfers in of £0.750m in 2023/24. 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.
- 8.4 Reserves overall, when benchmarked against the wider sector, remain in line.
- 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. In 2024/25, this internal borrowing, if replaced by PWLB through not being available, would result in a cost of c.£1.500m per annum based on the current programme.



Item No. on Agenda

Report to the Police Fire and Crime Panel – 13 November 2023

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
- Key investment areas
- 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 2023/24 to 2027/28 including an update on the fiscal landscape facing the Fire and Rescue Service, current year financial performance and reviews and updates future assumptions for pay and inflation and also future funding.
- 1.2 The MTFS for the five-year period 2023/24 to 2027/28 was approved by the Staffordshire Commissioner following presentation to the Police, Fire and Crime Panel on 13 February 2023. The approved MTFS included an estimate gap in funding of around £1.3m by 2025/26.
- 1.3 This MTFS report provides an update on the estimated savings required beyond 2023/24 including updates on pay pressure and increasing costs due to the ongoing levels of inflation. Whilst the direction of inflation is downward many these factors are largely outside of the control of the Authority. It has been estimated that the total cost of inflation for English FRA's for 2023/24 amounts to a budget pressure of c.£141m.
- 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.
- 1.5 Following the budget and precept presentation to the Panel in February, the Commissioner approved a 4.85% increase in Council Tax equivalent to an additional £3.90 per annum, and whilst this increase was below the £5 referendum limit it was the biggest annual increase in the last fifteen years. This increased the Band D Council Tax for the Staffordshire Commissioner FRA to £84.25.
- 1.6 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.
- 1.7 A revised two year pay offer was accepted by the FBU which included a 7% pay award for 2022 and a 5% award for 2023. This updated MTFS assumes that a further increase of 5% is now predicted for 2024, which is above the original MTFS assumption of 3%. The local government pay award which covers support staff has been agreed in principle by the representative bodies but formal notification has not been received.
- 1.8 The National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) are currently requesting that the Home Office and Treasury consider a further £5 referendum limit for the Fire and Rescue Sector which will be given due consideration by the Commissioner and incorporated into the budget consultation process for 2024/25.
- 1.9 As part of the budget process for 2024/25 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 12 February 2024.
- 1.10 A high-level timetable is included in this report, to lay out the necessary steps and key meetings to communicate the 2024/25 budgeting process and updated MTFS.

2.0 The Budget Process

- 2.1 The 2024/25 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 2024/25 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. Budget holders have been asked to develop Financial Business Continuity Plans as part of this process. This process has proved successful in previous years and ensures that the financial acumen of all budget holders is continually being developed.
- 2.3 The headline timetable for the 2024/25 budget process is shown below:

<u>Budget Timetable</u>	<u>Task</u>
9 October 2023	Budget Preparation commenced
16 October for 6 weeks	Budget holder consultation
29 November and 7 December	Capital Review Group Meetings
30 November – 4 December 2024	Draft pay and non-pay budget ready for review process
19 December 2023	Draft Local Government Finance Settlement (expected date)
December 2023 – January 2024	Budget Consultation and budget presentations to the Strategic Governance Board (24/01/24) and Service Management Board (08/01/24)
31 January 2024	ETAP (Finance Panel Meeting)
31 January 2024	Business Rates Budget Finalised (NNDR1)
12 February 2024	Police, Fire and Crime Panel- Precept setting and Budget 2023/24 / MTFS report / capital and treasury management strategy reports
19 February 2024	All precept notices issued following Commissioner approval

3.0 Background and updated Financial Position 2023/24

- 3.1 The total revenue budget was approved by the Staffordshire Commissioner for 2023/24 at **£46.465m**, following presentation to the Panel in February 2023.
- 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 2023/24, 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 2023/24 was made up of three separate areas:

	2023/24 £m
1% share of Local Business Rates	4.070
Business Rates Top-up	6.212
Revenue Support Grant (RSG)	5.422
Total Settlement Funding	15.704

- 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 £84.25 (£1.62 per week) for the Staffordshire Commissioner Fire and Rescue Authority, resulting in collection of **£30.761m** for 2023/24 based upon a collection tax base of 360,299 properties and a collection surplus of **£0.405m**.

Financial Position – as at 30 September 2023 (half year)

- 3.5 The total revenue spend as at 30 September was £23m, showing a slightly favorable position against the budget of £23.3m
- 3.6 This includes additional costs for Business Rates following the recent revaluation by the Valuation Office Agency (VOA) at £0.3m, which has been partly mitigated year to date by other property savings. This increase in business rates is being challenged by the Authority but this is a very protracted process with the VOA.
- 3.7 Overall Pay spend at £14.8m was £0.6m (3.9%) lower than budget and with an ongoing lower trend of activity and availability from on-call stations and support staff vacancies. Positively the on-call FTE has increased by 16 in the year to 262.5 and is 5 higher than 12 months ago with a good recruitment pipeline. In addition, the new crewing trial which commenced on 1 June, allows a team of three to attend smaller incidents such as a bin fire or they can attend larger incidents providing they are supported by an engine with a full crew. This crewing trial is being evaluated with a number of focus group meetings planned to take place during November.
- 3.8 The Support staff FTE is also 21.4 below budget with a number of vacancies held during the ongoing review of Prevention and Protection departments as part of the Service transformation programme. A reduction of 3 FTE is due to a number of posts operating at below 1 FTE where staff have reduced hours of work as part of the Services commitment to staff wellbeing.

- 3.9 Non-pay costs overall are showing an early adverse trend, mainly due to the additional costs in business rates. Costs for utilities have stabilised and are favorable to budget moving into the winter period. Invoices have now been received for Airwave charges in year which reflect the increase associated with and RPI increase which was higher than budget.
- 3.10 Income is favorable from s31 grants and cash held by the authority is performing well with base interest rates delivering around 5% which is £147k better than budget.
- 3.11 The above trends for pay and non-pay have now been incorporated into an early view of the forecast for the year-end. Whilst overall the forecast is in line with budget the forecast savings with pay and additional income has allowed for a reduction in the expected use of reserves. The forecast will be updated during the budget challenge sessions with budget holders as discussed above.
- 3.12 The Capital Programme spend for the year was approved at £6.6m with £1.9m of spend reprofiled from last year. The commitment to date is £3.5m and includes orders raised for £2.7m.

MTFS Assumptions and Update

- 4.1 The Commissioner receives funding from a number of sources as included above with the majority of this being received through Settlement Funding and the Council Tax Precept. Income assumptions are currently being reviewed as part of the MTFS process ahead of the funding settlement expected to be received on 19 December 2023.
- 4.2 The Commissioner and Staffordshire Fire are reviewing current planned revenue savings, pressures, proposed priority investments and capital spend. This work being undertaken over the months of September and October and is ongoing into the budget setting process in preparation for the 2024/25 settlement and has identified a number of high-level revenue pressures and considers the potential opportunity arising from another year of council tax flexibility.
- 4.3 The current MTFS Assumptions have been updated as follows:

Pay

The MTFS assumed that following the spike in pay awards and inflation seen during 2022 and 2023, pay increases would have reduced back to 3% for 2024/25. This assumption has now been updated and pay award of c.5% are now being widely forecast across the fire sector and is reflected within the table below.

The net savings following the review of Prevention and Protection are estimated at £0.3m annum and have been incorporated into the MTFS, as part of the overall transformation programme savings.

Pensions

The new employer rate for contributions into the Firefighters Pension Scheme will be announced later this year. This will be reflective of the increase in the SCAPE rate (Superannuation Contributions Adjusted for Past Experience) used as part of the ongoing 2020 valuations of the Firefighters' Pension Scheme. The SCAPE rate has been adjusted to CPI plus 1.7%, with this higher discount rate increasing the liability of the scheme.

For 2024/25 the Home Office have committed to covering any additional cost for 1 year only, and the assumption used within the MTFS refresh is that this grant will cover at least 90% of the additional cost (as per previous experience).

The Authority also holds a specific earmarked reserve that should cover any additional costs in 2025/26 should the grant be restricted to a single year. Of course, should full pension costs be passed onto local authorities and local tax payers this would have a significant impact upon local authority finances.

Utility Costs and Insurance

The current year trends for electricity and gas costs are being closely monitored during the year and after six months of the year are showing a favorable position. This position of course does not reflect the impact of the coming winter period but a small savings has been assumed for 2024/25.

The way the Authority procures insurance is currently under review and is expected to deliver a favorable position into the medium term.

Council Tax and Referendum Limit assumptions

The National Fire Chiefs Council and the Home Office are in discussion with Ministers and Treasury regarding the referendum limit that will be included within the Local Government Finance Settlement.

This MTFS update acknowledges that a £5 (5.93%), limit may again be available for a single year for consideration by the Panel and Commissioner as part of the budget setting process for 2024/25. However, this update of the MTFS assumes the precept level will remain in line with the current MTFS at £2.52 (2.99%).

A £5 increase in Council Tax will raise an additional £0.9m of Council Tax in 2024/25 and would support the additional pay award assumption and importantly also provide some investment into the Fire and Rescue Service.

Revenue Support Grant

As detailed in paragraph 3.3 above, the Authority receives c.£5.4m in Revenue Support Grant (RSG) as part of the Settlement Funding Assessment. The Home Office have

confirmed that RSG will be increased by September 2023 CPI which will result in an increase better than the MTFS assumed, delivering an additional £0.2m per annum.

The table below shows the changes in key assumptions based upon the MTFS set in February 2023:

Category	2024/25 Plan	2025/26 Plan	2026/27 Plan	2027/28 Plan
<u>Pay Award</u>				
MTFS	3.0%	3.0%	2.0%	2.0%
REVISED	5.0%	3.0%	2.0%	2.0%
<u>Council Tax</u>				
MTFS	2.99%	1.99%	1.99%	1.99%
REVISED	2.99%	1.99%	1.99%	1.99%
<u>Revenue Support Grant</u>				
MTFS	3.0%	2.0%	2.0%	2.0%
REVISED	6.5%	2.0%	2.0%	2.0%

- 4.4 The table below shows the estimated impact of major assumptions based upon the current reporting position and the updated MTFS assumptions:

	2023/24 Budget	2024/25 Plan	2025/26 Plan	2026/27 Plan
<i>MTFS Position Budget 23/24</i>		(0.71)	(1.30)	(1.31)
		<u>£m</u>	<u>£m</u>	<u>£m</u>
MTFS Update - October 2023				
<u>Opportunities and savings</u>				
Utility Costs and Insurance		0.17	0.23	0.23
RSG Funding to latest CPI Estimate		0.19	0.19	0.20
Interest Receivable	0.10	0.20	0.08	
Pay Savings / Transformation workstream	0.70	0.30	0.30	0.30
Total Opportunities and Savings	0.80	0.86	0.80	0.73
<u>New Risks</u>				
Business rates - VOA increase	(0.37)	(0.37)	(0.37)	(0.37)
Pay Award 3% to 5%		(0.47)	(0.48)	(0.49)
Impact of Employer Pension Contribution Increase		(0.10)	(0.10)	(0.10)
Other and Reserves	(0.40)			
Total new risks	(0.77)	(0.94)	(0.95)	(0.97)
<i>Revised MTFS Position</i>		(0.79)	(1.45)	(1.54)

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.
- 5.3 The following sensitivity analysis is based upon the approved MTFS paper from February 2023:

Cost / Income Area	Change	£000s
Pay Costs	+/- 1%	297
Premises Costs (incl utilities)	+/- 1%	50
Vehicles	+/- 1%	10
Supplies and Services	+/- 1%	82
Employer Pension Contributions	+/- 1%	210
Business Rates	+/- 1%	40
Revenue Support Grant	+/- 1%	54
Precept	+/- 1%	303
Council Tax Base	+/- 1%	312

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 There are a number of topics that have explored 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
- 6.3 Savings options in excess of £1m were included within the approved MTFS of which £0.7m has been fully implemented. This pipeline savings is now estimated at c.£1.3m - £1.4m and incorporates savings from the Prevention and Protection review are estimated at a net £0.3m per annum recurring.
- 6.5 The progress of the transformation work is logged and monitored by the Service on an electronic live tracker utilising a programme called SharePoint. The tracker is scrutinised by the Service’s Management Board and the Commissioners Governance Board.
- 6.6 The Panel should note that as part of the most recent Spending Review, the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) and the Local Government Association (LGA) proposed that across Fire and Rescue Services (FRSs) in England, the Fire and Rescue sector could create 2% of non-pay efficiencies and needs to increase productivity by 3% by 2024/25.

7.0 Investment into the Service

- 7.1 In order for the Service to continue to improve as an organisation to effectively deliver against the statutory duties as a Fire and Rescue Service, there is a requirement to identify and forecast where we need to invest over the next few years. Investment is needed in order the Service to continually improve the service to the public, in a fast-changing landscape and to meet the challenges facing every Fire and Rescue Service in the UK.
- 7.2 The Service has identified additional investment of c.£0.5m of recurring revenue per annum and c.£4.4m of additional capital spend. The revenue consequences of this additional capital spend would be c.£0.4m per annum increasing the annual revenue impact to £0.9m. These investment areas will be considered by the Commissioner as part of the budget/precept setting process for 2024/25, with overall affordability being considered during this process.
- 7.3 These investment areas are considered in more detail below:

a) Supervisory and middle managers development

The recent HMICFRS report into culture and values within the sector has demonstrated that the Service needs to invest significantly in order to provide the knowledge and understanding at managerial levels, to improve standards, improve culture, and deal with inappropriate behaviours whenever they occur. Therefore, it is of paramount importance that the Service increase the development training of all supervisory and middle managers, both current and new in order to redress the imbalance that we have within the Service. The National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) have developed a number of products for supervisory and middle managers, which the service can adopt and that will support our improvement journey.

b) Technology and Systems

A number of ICT systems and associated processes are outdated and the approach to improvement due to reduced resources over the last few years has meant that progress has been slow. In order to exploit the benefits of new systems the Service needs to accelerate these projects and which will require investment.

Investment areas include Office 365, Mobile Data Terminals (MDT's) for Appliances, the Service's resource management system Firewatch, Fire Control and new systems which includes the update of the existing prevent system.

c) Response

In order to provide the most up to date resources to deal with the changing risks within the County, it is imperative that the Service explores new and improved technology. Whether that be the new drone capability that the Service has recently invested in, the new ALP's, or emerging technologies to fight fires involving new risks such as lithium ION batteries, there is a significant investment requirement.

Whilst there has been investment into heavy fleet over the last ten years, the reserve fleet is aging and will need updating. The wear and tear of these appliances and the lack of available parts is impacting upon impact maintaining a fit for purpose response. Special appliances require updating to include new technologies to keep firefighters safe and allow incidents to be resolved faster, supporting the commitment to community safety. Future investment into all aspects of the fleet will ensure the Service has a flexible and innovate approach to response vehicles.

d) Shared Services

The Service is also working with the Head of Estates as part of the wider ongoing structure work being undertaken. As part of this exercise it has been identified that additional resource investment is required into the shared service in order to deliver the strategic priorities.

e) Community engagement

Successful community engagement increases public confidence levels of the service, improves recruitment and retention by becoming an employer of choice and allowing the Service to promote prevention activity and ethos of personal safety with members of the public and businesses. In order to build on and maintain this position investment in time and resources is required, enabling the largest proportion of the workforce, i.e. firefighters, to perform effective engagement activity we will need to create available time and resource particularly in our on-call areas.

f) Protection

The Service would like to enhance the capacity to deliver fire protection support, advice and auditing processes through operational crews. To competently achieve this, grant funding from the Home Office is being utilised to provide appropriate training, however recruiting and retaining highly skilled and qualified specialist Inspecting officer is very challenging. Since the publication of the Fire Safety Act and Building Safety Act, Fire Safety experts have become a sought-after skillset both within the public and private sector in a competitive market. In order for the Service to achieve its statutory duties invest in this area will be required to remain competitive and to retain qualified staff.

8.0 Capital

- 8.1 As part of the current MTFS refresh and budget build for 2024/25 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.
- 8.2 The capital programme for 2023/24 was approved at £6.6m including £1.9m of carry-over from 2022/23. The capital commitment as at 30 September was £3.5m which is c.50% of the latest programme forecast which is just over £7m.

- 8.3 The work scheduled for Abbots Bromley (minor refurbishment) has now been completed and the planned refurbishment of Brewood Fire Station is scheduled to commence in 2024 following detailed scope and design work being completed.
- 8.4 The two new Aerial Ladder Platforms (ALP's) have now been delivered into the Service, with two new appliances expected in 2024.
- 8.5 The regional contract to replace all Breathing Apparatus Equipment has now been signed by all parties with timelines for new equipment being agreed.
- 8.6 A full capital programme update and Capital Strategy will be presented to the Panel in February as part of the budget and MTFS papers.

9.0 Reserves and Balances

- 9.1 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.
- 9.2 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 2023/24 and the overall provision of £1.9m has remained unchanged for a number of years and represents 4% of the revenue budget for the year.
- 9.3 At 1 April 2023 the Authority held £7.3m in Specific/Earmarked Reserves. This reserve is supported by the approved Reserves Strategy which will be updated for the new budget year. This reserve reduced at year end following earmarked contribution to capital spend reducing long term debt.
- 9.4 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 2024/25 based upon the upward pressures identified within this report.
- 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 £0.4m per annum based upon latest increases in borrowing rates from the Public Works Loan Board.

**Staffordshire Fire
and Rescue Service**

Statement of Assurance 2022/23



www.staffordshirefire.gov.uk

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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**.

Polish

Jeżeli chciałoby 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 نقوم 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 فورمتی دیگر می‌خواهید و یا اگر احتیاج به سرویس مترجم دارید، لطفاً با ما تماس بگیرید

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Welcome

Welcome to our annual Statement of Assurance for 2022/23, where we will discuss the progress made against the priorities set in our Community Risk Management Plan (which we call our Safety Plan 2020-2024).

We are committed to providing the best service through our Service Transformation program, focusing on areas such as corporate restructure, response and crewing, prevention and protection, estates and shared services. We have been working closely with the Staffordshire Commissioner, Ben Adams, on options to achieve a more efficient and effective fire and rescue service. Balancing the Medium-Term Financial Strategy is challenging as budgets are reduced, but we remain committed to investing in the Service and its people.

Thank you to everyone who contributed to the inspection that led to the publication of His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Service (HMICFRS) report in July 2022. The inspection focused on effectiveness, efficiency, and how well we look after our people within the fire service.

The report highlighted that the Service was rated as "Good" in terms of effectiveness, including understanding and preventing fires, responding to major incidents, and identifying at-risk individuals in communities. Positive strides were noted

in response to the Grenfell Tower tragedy, such as improving the safety of high-rise building residents through a sprinkler scheme.

The Service was also rated as "Good" in terms of affordability and continually seeking ways to enhance effectiveness and efficiency through the use of technology. However, there were areas where improvement was required. These included protecting the public through fire regulation, responding to emergencies, resource management, promoting the right values and culture, and ensuring fairness and diversity.

Since we first mentioned the outcome of the inspection in our last Statement of Assurance, we have made significant progress against these recommendations, which you can read about in more detail in this report. I remain confident that by working together, with partners, engaging with, and listening to our communities we can achieve positive results and deliver the best outcomes for the people of Staffordshire.

The Service underwent significant external scrutiny over the period of this report. In addition to the report from HMICFRS, the Operational Firefighter Apprenticeship Scheme received a positive report from Ofsted, grading it as good overall. Our external auditors RSM provided substantial

assurance around the governance of the Community Risk Management Plan.

The year saw significant demands on resources, particularly during a hot dry summer that resulted in numerous operational incidents. The Service's operational, prevention, and protection teams handled these incidents professionally, implementing lessons learned from previous debriefs and utilising new equipment and tactics. The prevention teams contributed to reducing incidents, while the protection teams achieved significant outcomes in the built environment and caught up on backlogs caused by the pandemic.

During the early part of 2023, we faced additional challenges such as potential industrial action, financial difficulties, and increased risk due to the cost of living crisis. However, I am confident that we are in a good place to overcome these issues by respecting diverse perspectives and working together to continue providing a high-quality service to the communities we serve.

A significant amount of work went into the resilience planning related to the potential industrial action, however through successful negotiations between the employers and the Fire Brigades Union, the dispute was settled and an appropriate pay increase was agreed. I appreciate the open and honest approach to the negotiations by all parties and am sure that like me most will be relieved that industrial action was thankfully averted.

The fire sector received a spotlight report on culture and values within the sector from HMICFRS in March 2023. It is important that we are regularly talking about how we treat each other, and the way in which we deal with and challenge inappropriate behaviour,

as we all have a part to play in influencing our organisational culture on a daily basis.

National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC), the Local Government Association (LGA), and the Association of Police and Crime Commissioners (APCC) have developed a National Core Code of Ethics for the fire sector. We have adopted the code in its entirety. The ethical principles have now replaced our previous values and behavioural framework, and are now the foundation of the behaviours expected of all our staff and are a fundamental part of all recruitment and promotion processes as well as appraisals.

The term of the **Safety Plan 2020-2024** is to be extended and will now conclude at the end of December 2024, rather than 31st March 2024. This is due to the upcoming Staffordshire Commissioner elections in May 2024. The new Commissioner will need time to develop their own Fire and Rescue Service Plan and understand how the Service's plan and priorities align with it. This will also help to ensure that the governance arrangements for the Commissioner's office, police and fire are more closely aligned in the future.

Despite a year of significant challenges, the Service has once again demonstrated its resilience and dedication and I would like to thank everyone at Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Service for their continued hard work and commitment in protecting our communities across the county.



Rob Barber
Chief Fire Officer

***Her Majesty's Inspectorate is now referred to as His Majesty's Inspectorate throughout this document following the passing of Her Majesty, Queen Elizabeth II on 8 September 2022.**

Introduction

The **Fire and Rescue National Framework for England** requires us to produce an Annual Statement of Assurance on financial, governance and operational matters so that our people, partners, key stakeholders and Government can easily understand our governance arrangements, evaluate our performance and see how efficient and effective we are.

This Statement of Assurance sets out the financial, governance and response arrangements that the Staffordshire Commissioner had in place for the period 1 April 2022 to 31 March 2023. It considers the progress the Service has made against our priorities during the year and is intended 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 and reducing the risk, from fire and other emergencies and improving firefighter safety.

We would also like to reflect upon the impact that factors such as the COVID pandemic, financial pressures, and extreme weather have had on our activities and resources and use this as an opportunity to tell you about our future plans.

*We have written this statement with the aim of providing our people and 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 on Statements of Assurance for fire and rescue authorities in England** published by the Department for Communities and Local Government.*

Our Priorities

There is a statutory requirement under the **Fire and Rescue National Framework for England** for each fire and rescue Service to have in place a Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP), which describes how the service intends to keep people safe and meet its statutory obligations. We currently call this our **Safety Plan 2020-2024**, but in line with guidance from the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC), moving forward we will refer to our next plan as our CRMP. So, in this report you will see that we refer to both the current **Safety Plan 2020-2024** and the proposed new CRMP.

This report highlights the progress we have made against each of the four priorities set out in 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** complement 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:

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

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

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.

Service reform

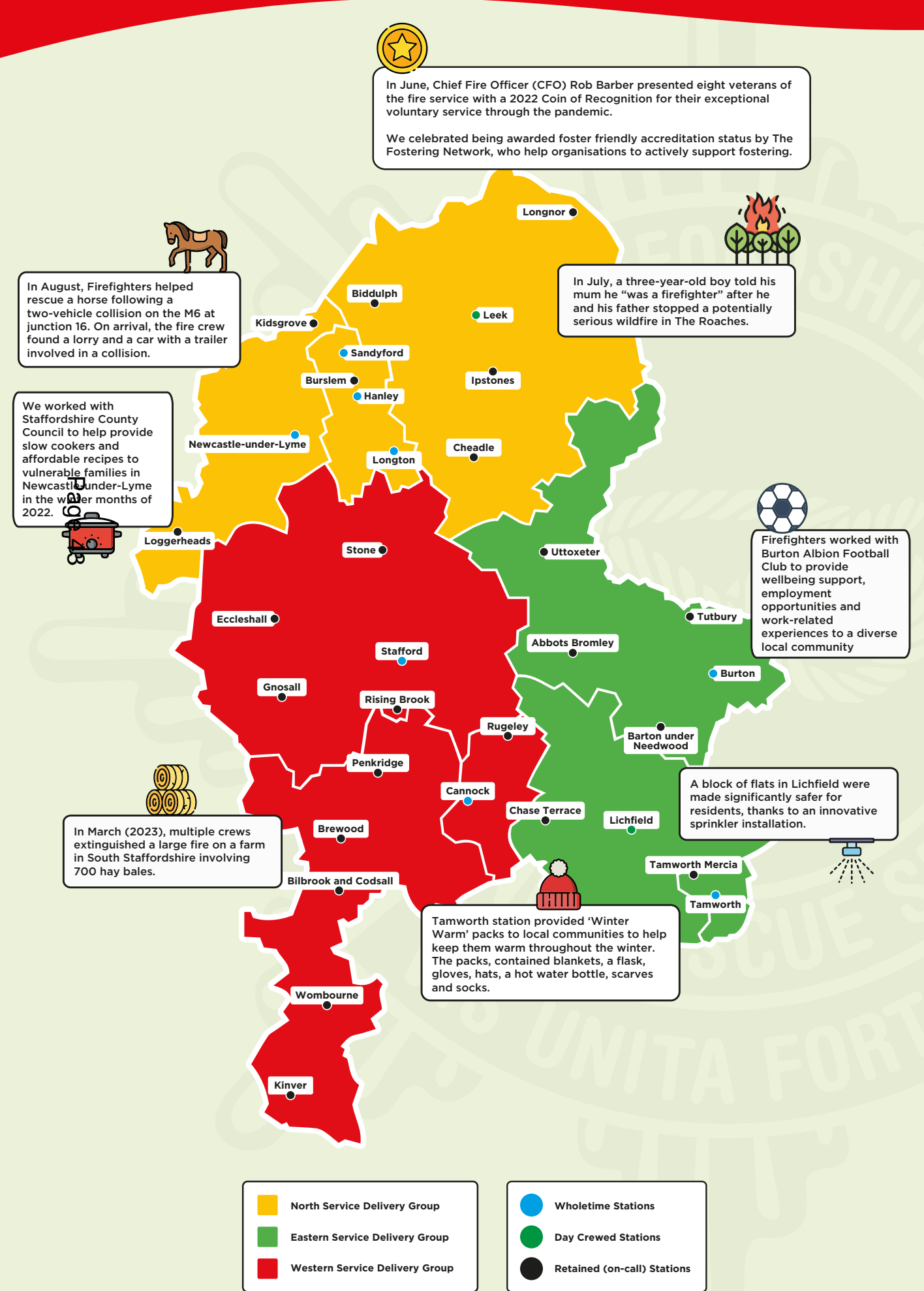
We aim to develop and support a diverse, healthy and highly professional workforce who are motivated and empowered to improve our service

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



Scope of Responsibility

The Staffordshire Commissioner (the Commissioner) has been responsible for governing both Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Service and Staffordshire Police since 1st August 2018.

The Commissioner, who is elected by public vote, is responsible for holding the Chief Fire Officer and Chief Constable to account and ensuring that local fire and police services are delivered effectively and efficiently. The Commissioner also handles complaints and conduct matters relating to the Chief Fire Officer and Chief Constable.

Corporate governance is about how the Commissioner makes sure that the right things are done in the correct way for the right people in an open, honest, inclusive and timely way. The Commissioner is responsible for ensuring that:

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

Extension of the term of the Safety Plan

The Commissioner has the responsibility of approving the Service’s CRMP. The current **Safety Plan 2020-2024** was approved by the Commissioner in 2020. This plan outlines the Service’s strategic vision, priorities, objectives, and strategies to enhance and respond effectively to the needs of our communities across Staffordshire.

Legally the Service must have a new CRMP in place when the previous plan ends, so we have already started to develop our next CRMP. We would normally expect to develop the next CRMP for launch on 1st April 2024 in line with our financial, planning and performance cycles to cover the next four year period, i.e. 2024-2028.

The elections for the office of the Staffordshire Commissioner are due to take place in May 2024. The office of the Commissioner is required to produce its own Fire and Rescue Service Plan and approve the Service’s CRMP and as such, the new Commissioner will need



Ben Adams
Staffordshire
Commissioner

some time to develop and deliver its own plan and understand how the Service’s plan and priorities support this.

The Strategic Governance Board has agreed that the term of the current **Safety Plan 2020-2024** be extended until the end of 2024 to allow time for the new Commissioner to take office and fully understand the planning process and plan contents and to ensure that the governance arrangements for the Commissioner’s office, police and fire are more closely aligned.

We will undertake a review of strategic risks facing the Service to ensure there are no significant changes or areas of concern on which the Service would need to consult with its workforce or its communities.

Scrutiny and Performance Management

A governance framework is in place for the Commissioner to monitor, scrutinise, support, and challenge the Service’s performance against the priorities in our **Safety Plan 2020-2024**. This framework ensures that objectives are met, and services are delivered appropriately and cost-effectively.

A robust performance management system is well established within the Service, overseen by senior management. Key performance indicators (quantitative and qualitative) are used to assess progress towards strategic objectives. Regular reporting of achievements against these indicators is conducted at the Service Delivery Board, while the Commissioner’s office scrutinises

monitoring reports at the Strategic Governance Board (SGB). Additionally, detailed financial reports are reviewed by SGB on a quarterly basis, covering budget performance in revenue, capital, cash, and delivery of efficiencies and savings.

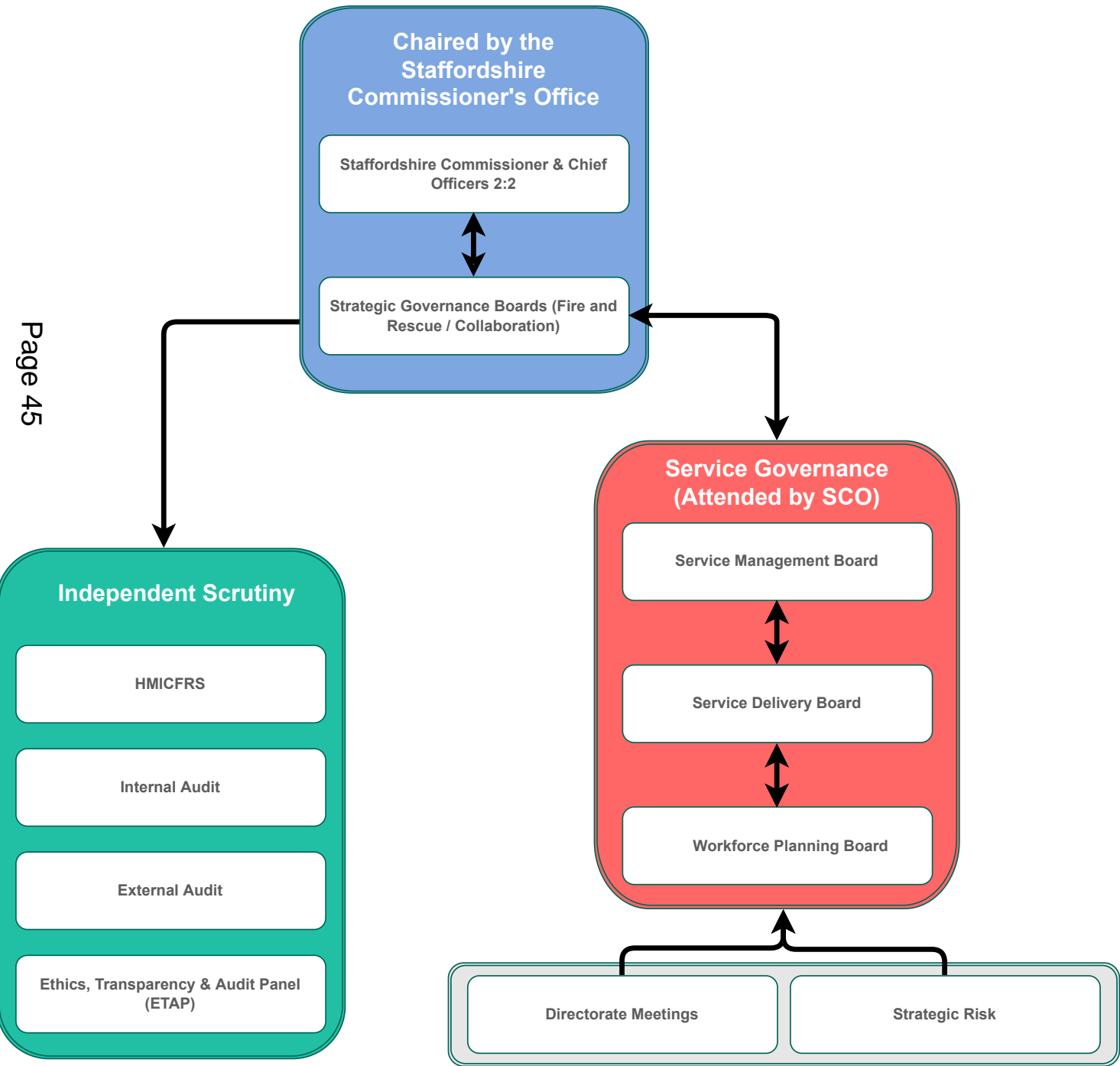
The Ethics, Transparency, and Audit Panel (ETAP), which includes a separate Finance Panel, serves as the Audit Committee within the governance structure. The Finance Panel offer professional advice to ETAP Members, ensuring thorough scrutiny and challenge.

The Commissioner has fulfilled the duty, as per the Local Government Act 1999, to make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the way our services are delivered having regard to a combination of economy, efficiency, and effectiveness. In doing so, the Commissioner has established and maintained appropriate governance arrangements to manage the Service’s affairs, facilitate the effective exercise of its function, including arrangements for the management of risk.





The Governance Structure in place under the Staffordshire Commissioner during 2022/2023 is detailed below:



Public Performance meetings

These meetings are held at least twice a year and provide an opportunity for the Commissioner to scrutinise the Service’s response, prevention and protection activities and consider progress we have made against the priorities set out in our Safety Plan 2020-2024. There will be a particular focus on certain areas during these meetings to allow for a better understanding of how we support and protect our communities in Staffordshire. This year’s topics have included:

- Service transformation
- HMICFRS Fire and Rescue Inspection 2021/22 (Effectiveness, Efficiency & People)
- Management and governance of the **Safety Plan 2020-2024**
- Fire sector values and culture.

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 have been established with nearby fire and rescue services to enhance preparedness for situations involving cross-border, large scale, or intricate incidents that require additional resources. Our collaboration extends to supporting the Staffordshire Civil Contingencies Unit, which is responsible for coordinating multi-agency training, planning, and response efforts for complex incidents that could significantly affect our county. Examples of such incidents include pandemics, extensive flooding, or acts of terrorism. These measures aim to ensure a coordinated and effective response to safeguard the well-being of the community.

The Service actively participates in the national resilience programme and is capable of deploying various assets and resources to assist in major incidents nationwide. This support is crucial in situations where local resources would be insufficient to handle the overwhelming demands of such incidents. By contributing to the national resilience programme, our Service aims to provide timely and effective assistance to areas in need across the country.

We have robust business continuity plans in place to manage corporate risk and to ensure the uninterrupted delivery of fire and rescue services to the communities of Staffordshire, even during major disruptions.

Annual Governance Statement

The Commissioner receives all funding, including government grants, for fire and rescue services. However, it is important to clarify that Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Service and Staffordshire Police are separate entities with distinct budgets, staff, and governance processes.

The Annual Governance Statement for the period 1st April 2022 to 31st March 2023 will be published on our website within the **Annual Statement of Accounts** and outlines how the Service manages its governance and internal control measures. The Narrative Statement within the same document provides a comprehensive overview of the Service's financial performance for the year. It provides a clear overview of the funding, expenditure, and resource allocation in line with the **Safety Plan 2020-2024**. The statement demonstrates the Service's commitment to strong financial management, internal control, and transactional integrity.

We are satisfied that in 2022/23, the Authority's financial, governance, and operational assurance arrangements were effective. Our business was conducted in accordance with proper standards and laws, ensuring efficient and effective use of public funds. Additionally, we have made every effort 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

Between 1st April 2022 and 31st March 2023, the Service has completed 13,056 Safe and Well visits, targeting the most vulnerable members of our communities over the age of 80. We had a significant backlog of visits due to not being able to carry out in person visits during the COVID pandemic, but our technicians and crews worked hard to clear this.

Our Contact Centre continue to manage our Safe and Well booking procedures, supported by the Business Support teams. They also assist with several projects across the county, where we are working in partnership with different organisations to provide safety interventions to vulnerable members of the community. These include the fitting of carbon monoxide alarms and research studies for mental health projects.

Safe and Well technicians continued to deliver COVID-19 anti-viral medication to members of the community, when requested through our Contact Centre. The Service has also looked at ways we can help support our communities through the cost of living crisis, such as assisting Staffordshire County Council with a 'Winter Warmth' project and working with the Government to help people manage their utility bills. As well as completing a Safe and Well visit for the vulnerable person, the Service can then refer them on for a Household Support Grant to support their energy usage.

Living Alone Campaign

In June 2022, we launched the second phase of our Living Alone campaign. Home safety was the focus and over a four-week period we covered having smoke alarms, testing them, escape routes and 'get out stay out'. The campaign included Sentinel newspaper and bus advertising, a competition for schools, posters, leaflets, social media posts and videos.

The campaigns in numbers:

- Social posts reached **198,500** people
- Tip videos featuring firefighters and prevent staff were viewed **8,700** times
- Official video viewed **9,100** times
- Webpage views **3,036**
- **80** internal bus adverts

Prior to launching the campaign, feedback was sought on the artwork from a local walking group, many of whom were the target audience.

One attendee, had recently been evacuated from her home due to a fatal fire in her block of flats. She had temporarily moved in with her partner, whose bungalow lacked smoke alarms. After the session, she checked the smoke alarms at her partner's home and discovered they were missing. She promptly contacted us. We sent a technician the same day to carry out a Safe and Well check. Word spread amongst her friends, resulting in more safety referrals.

In the autumn, the focus of the campaign moved to promoting safe practices for keeping warm. Safety messages regarding this topic were shared through traditional media channels and social media in late September, coinciding with the expected increase in energy usage on 1st October.

There was a concern that if people resort to alternative heating methods or take shortcuts to reduce energy bills, there may be an increase in fires related to keeping warm. In November as the weather became colder, we covered topics such as open fire and chimney safety, using appropriate fuel, and ensuring proper storage of heaters.

Prince's Trust

This year 171 young people have been supported through our Prince's Trust Programmes 'Team' 'Get Started' and 'Explore'. We have experienced staff shortages throughout the year, with a new Programme Team Leader for Stafford and two assistants, one for Stafford and Cannock recruited.

We moved delivery of one of the programmes from Stone to Stafford where there was a

greater need in the area for our young people. Following the move, numbers and interest has increased significantly. A real positive has been that our firefighters are engaging and supporting the programme in multiple ways.

We are exploring the potential to have a seconded police officer working alongside our Prince's Trust teams to increase support and resilience and hopefully improve youth engagement and understanding.

We are developing a partnership with probation services across the south of the county, presenting to their officers with a view to encouraging young people to join our programme

We will run a minimum of 12 programmes throughout the next twelve months in conjunction with the Prince's Trust, reaching an estimated 150 young people who will be supported through our programmes.

- Stafford Community Fire Station – Prince's Trust 'Team', 3 times a year
- Cannock Community Fire Station – Prince's Trust 'Team', 3 times a year
- Get Started – 6 programmes per year

Safe+Sound

Safe+Sound aims to support communities to make informed and positive lifestyle choices, improving their health, safety and wellbeing. Each weekly programme is broadcast live at 10am on a Wednesday (term time only) and is then available on demand via the [Learn Live Channel](#) for Key Stage 2 children.

Between 1st April 2022 and March 2023, 275,393 total devices viewed the programmes of which 106,903 (38.8%) were based in Staffordshire. We work with our local Personal, Social, Health and Economic (PSHE) leads and the Service's Communications team to promote awareness of the programme and link

Our Progress

all programme content to the PSHE curriculum to enhance its usefulness to teachers. Examples of topics covered include:

- 'Back to school' – Calm Careers
- 'Making a 999 call' – West Midlands Ambulance Service
- 'At the level crossing' – Network Rail
- 'Litter' – Silverdale Country Park Ranger
- 'The recovery position' – Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Service
- 'Hazard Perception' – Staffordshire Safer Roads Partnership
- 'Who are you talking to online?' – Staffordshire Police

Throughout the year, we also delivered some special editions:

April – focusing on the arrival of 'Knife Angel' in Stoke-on-Trent, including interviews with local Police about knife crime and the Knife Angel project

May – linked into 'Dementia Action Week' and included the reading of local author Barry Coleman's book 'Scary Aunt Sally'

June – World Environment week included content about wildlife, using water and about litter and its impact on the environment

July – was all about staying safe in the holidays – on the beach, wellbeing, and at home (testing your smoke alarm and escape plans)

In March 2023, we delivered a variety of workshops, with the support of our partners, at Sandyford Community Fire Station to 481 Year 5/6 children and 42 adults from nine schools:

- Fire Safety in the Home – Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Service
- What to do in an Emergency – Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Service

- Water Safety – Canal and River Trust
- Trucks and Child Safety – Hawkins Logistics/DHL
- Money Sense – HSBC

Falls Response Team

Our Falls Response Team have gone from strength to strength during the pilot of this scheme in partnership with the National Health Service (NHS), Integrated Care Board (ICB) and the Midlands Partnership Foundation Trust (MPFT) so much so that we are pleased to report that the scheme will be extended to 31st March 2024.



The team have been trained to use of a range of lifting equipment and are using these to lift people who have fallen in a safe way. The team operates on a rota basis, 8am-7pm, seven days a week including Bank

Holidays. By having the Falls Response Team, we are able to support some of the most vulnerable people in our communities at their time of need.

We are called out to help some very vulnerable individuals in our communities and we can use these opportunities to ensure that they are as safe as possible within their own homes by carrying out Safe and Well visits and referring them on for additional support, such as a referral to the Community Falls Team.

"Delivering this new service means that we can work together to support the NHS at a really crucial time, hopefully preventing unnecessary hospital admissions. We've received some great feedback from their families too, so it's clear that they are making a positive difference"

Winter Warmth visits

Over the past few years, Staffordshire County Council have been working with the government to help people manage their energy bills during the winter with the Household Support Grant.

The council reached out to the Service to ask for assistance in reaching those in the community who are eligible for this support grant. The average age for those eligible is 80 so the process of uploading their latest energy bill may be difficult.

We have completed visits to just over half of the people on the target list taking the opportunity to carry our Safe and Well visits at the same time. With the potential for them to claim up to £800 each through the Household Support Grant, we have managed to help some of the vulnerable residents of Staffordshire potentially save £47,200 on their gas and electric bills.

Staffordshire Safer Roads partnership (SSRP)

Our education team works closely with the Staffordshire Safer Roads Partnership delivering Safe+Sound events for young drivers. Events are primarily delivered in areas identified as having a high number of young people involved in collisions, or at high risk of having a collision.

For example, in March 2023, Sandyford fire station hosted 40 young people from Newcastle and Stafford College who attended workshops including:

- Hazard perception – delivered in our immersive and interactive Safe+Sound Pod – SSRP
- What to do in a road emergency – including CPR and use of a defibrillator – Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Service
- Basic vehicle maintenance – Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Service
- Drugs, alcohol and driving – Staffordshire Police

Supporting Staffordshire's COVID vaccination programme

During the pandemic we provided logistical support to deliver vaccinations and anti-viral medication across the county to ensure that COVID protection was available to those who might have otherwise struggled to access it.

The Service continue to work closely with the Midlands Partnership NHS Foundation Trust (MPFT) to support the Targeted Vaccination Team. The MPFT provide vaccine teams to administer the vaccination and we continue to offer planning, logistical and transportation support and are keen to continue this work throughout 2023.

We also provide the use of our community fire stations as drop-in vaccination clinics making sure first, second and booster vaccines are available to all who need them.

"Working with the NHS, we've identified we can support vulnerable groups to get vaccinated and since January 2022 we've helped with the delivery of 7,630 doses of the vaccine!"

Safeguarding

We have a Safeguarding Board with members from across the Service and we follow a robust process when identifying and reporting safeguarding concerns within the community and within the workplace.

Overall, in the six months leading up to 31st March 2023, there have been 53 safeguarding concerns raised and referred. The majority of these concerns were raised following operational incidents or during Safe and Well visits.

Our Prevention teams will continue to work with some of the families and individuals, making referrals to Environmental Health and other key partners in social care as required helping secure further support and assistance.

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 in business premises

The Service conducts regular inspections of business premises to ensure compliance with fire safety laws. We support businesses to operate safely, but will take legal action when lives are at risk.

Our goal is to discourage other business owners from neglecting their responsibilities and encourage them to prioritise necessary fire precautions to keep their premises safe from fire.

The Service carries out a number of activities in this regard:

- **Fire safety audits**

During a Fire Safety Audit, we inspect premises and examine relevant documents to ensure compliance with the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005. We generally target high risk premises where the occupants could be deemed at most risk should a fire occur.

- **Licensing consultations**

In accordance with the Licensing Act 2003

and Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005, the licensing authority must consult the Service and provide an opportunity for representation regarding public safety (fire safety) prior to granting the licence.

- **Building Regulation consultations**

Whenever there are plans to construct a new building or make alterations to an existing one, Building Regulations approval becomes necessary. Typically, proposed plans for new premises or modifications are submitted to the local Authority Building Control department or an Approved Inspector for review. These plans must also be forwarded to the local Fire and Rescue Service as a statutory requirement for consultation. During this consultation, the Service verifies that occupants will have appropriate means of escape and that fire appliances can access the premises if required.

- **Post-Fire inspections**

An inspection will be carried out after a fire to understand how it happened, work with the premises owners to make sure they have business continuity arrangements in place and if necessary perform a full fire

“Protect people and places”
(Staffordshire Commissioner)

safety audit. The aim of this audit is to introduce preventative measures, mitigate the risk of future incidents, and ensure compliance with the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005.

Overall, protection activity increased between April 2022 and September 2022 to pre-pandemic levels in line with the removal of COVID-19 restrictions; which allowed more ‘in person’ visits to be completed. Between April 2022 and March 2023, 417 fire safety audits, 703 building regulation consultations and 662 licensing consultations were completed.

The number of fire safety audits completed remained at a consistent level through the period, and although lower numbers of audits were completed than the same time period in the previous year, this can in part be attributed to a notable increase in reactive demand for building regulation and licensing consultations. Licensing consultations in particular are shown to be at their highest level in the previous three years. This is an area of increasing demand for the Service.

We also experienced a reduction in the number of qualified staff due to retirements and leavers. However, the Service has since employed eight new members of staff to bolster our team of inspecting officers which when they are all fully trained should have a positive impact on the numbers of audits completed.

Care homes and sheltered accommodation have been the primary areas of focus for these audits, given limited access during the pandemic and the heightened risk to vulnerable residents from fire.

Of the post-fire inspections completed, most fires were seen in factories and warehouses. It should be noted that the majority of these fires were minor in nature and required minimal firefighting intervention.

Fire Safety (England) Regulations 2022

As of January 2023, the Fire Safety (England) Regulations 2022 (the Regulations) make it a requirement for owners/managers of high-rise residential buildings to provide information on their building(s) to their local fire and rescue service to help them plan and, if needed, provide an effective emergency response.

In high-rise residential buildings:

- Building Plans
- External Wall Systems
- Lifts and other Key Fire-Fighting Equipment
- Premises Information Boxes
- Wayfinding Signage

In residential buildings with storeys over 11 metres in height:

- Fire Door checks

In all multi-occupied residential buildings with two or more sets of domestic premises:

- Fire Safety Instructions
- Fire Door Information

The Regulations apply to England only and have been introduced as an important step towards implementing the recommendations of the Grenfell Tower Inquiry Phase 1 report. The Regulations can be found on the [UK Government website](#).

The Service is working with housing providers to ensure that suitable plans are sent to us.

The Service’s Protection team has also been responding to notifications of fixed installation faults within tall buildings. Twelve faults have been reported since the introduction of the Regulations, of which nine have subsequently been reported as rectified.

Our Progress

Community sprinkler project

In 2017, we identified 42 blocks of flats over five storeys in Staffordshire which would benefit from sprinkler systems being fitted. It was our aim to get these systems in place within a 10-year period. By March 2023, work on 19 of those buildings has been completed meaning we are on track to meet that objective.

In late 2020, we collaborated 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 turned in to a much larger project to provide sprinklers in eight different buildings across the wider West Midlands area. The sprinkler installation at Andrews House in Lichfield, an eight storey, 59 flat, block of retirement is the culmination of this aspect of the project and completes our joint working with Midland Heart.

Stoke-on-Trent City Council have continued their programme of retrofitting sprinklers in all their high-rise blocks of flats with four installations over the past year and a further two underway. They also have a new build programme in place to fit sprinklers into new three storey developments such as Rialto, Beardsmore and Sutherland Courts providing a level of fire safety over and above that provided by developments adhering to the minimum legal requirements.

Following the completion of the Andrews House installation, we have taken the opportunity to re-engage with local social

housing providers about the benefits of sprinklers. Our fire engineer is able to assist housing providers by liaising with sprinkler companies, providing technical support as well as speaking to residents to offer advice and reassurance about having sprinklers fitted in their homes.

We are also exploring the use of innovative technology where this will improve the outcomes of sprinkler activations.

The Manchester Arena Inquiry

The Manchester Arena Inquiry Volume II report was published in November 2022, and our thoughts remain with the families, friends, and colleagues, of the 22 people who lost their lives at this tragic event. As a Service, we will study the detail of the report findings and reflect these against our own policies and procedures locally. There is always learning from such tragic events, and we will work hard to ensure that the learning from this enquiry informs our approach in the future.

Business Fire Safety

Fire safety assistance has been provided for the directors and trustees of the Apedale Colliery Heritage Centre. We have worked with the heritage centre for a number of years and supported the great work this community project carries out.

Partnership development is underway with the National Farmers Union, providing support and education for fire safety in the rural sector.

Fire safety education was delivered to 80 students at Rodbaston Agricultural College; forming part of their core studies curriculum.

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.

Fire hydrants

Working fire hydrants are essential for firefighters to be able to access water sources for fighting fires and protecting the public. There are currently 39,000 fire hydrants within the county, which the Fire Services Act 2004 requires us to test to make sure they are working properly.

Crews at all ten of our whole-time stations across Staffordshire have received training to allow them to test hydrants within their station areas supporting our hydrant technicians. All hydrants are categorised according to risk depending on a number of factors such as property type, areas of high-silt and results are recorded electronically.

A total of 5,667 adopted fire hydrants have now undergone statutory testing and inspection in accordance with the requirements the Fire Services Act 2004: 3,419 by our two service hydrant technicians, 2,216 by operational crews at whole-time stations and 32 by the four on call stations in the west of the county Wombourne, Codsall, Brewood and Kinver.

Environmental and Sustainability Strategy 2022-2027

We start with our own equipment, buildings and estate when looking to contribute to building communities which are sustainable. Since we launched our new Environmental and Sustainability Strategy in January 2022, we have seen momentum building and individuals across the service contributing to some excellent green initiatives:

Carbon Accounting and Measures

- Our carbon footprint is now monitored and results are provided via an annual report.
- The Estates team, the joint Sustainability

Lead, and the Performance and Assurance team are working together to introduce measures around waste and utility usage across the estate. Waste data to be included in carbon footprint baseline and the group is looking at how best this information can be made visible to the workforce and included in performance meetings.

- The Sustainability Lead is looking at opportunities for collaboration between Police and Fire on environmental matters and a dedicated environment and sustainability Teams channel is now established to allow for easier information sharing between group members.

Electrification

- Tender process has been completed regarding charging points, which will be sited at Joint Emergency Transport Services (JETS) and our headquarters site, with Sandyford Community Fire Station to follow.
- Work is underway to provide a predictive analysis of the reduction of carbon emissions over the lifetime of electric service vehicles.
- We have approached a vehicle manufacturer regarding a trial of a fully-electric emergency vehicle. The hope is to produce a video diary to raise awareness and start the conversation around electrification of the blue light fleet.

Greenspaces and increasing Biodiversity

- A 'wild play day' was held in August 2022, with support from Staffordshire Wildlife Trust. Local primary school children had a go at creating bug hotels and bird boxes, giving them the chance to learn new skills as well as generating safe spaces for local wildlife.
- Planting of a wildflower summer meadow at Stone Community Fire Station in conjunction with the Staffordshire Wildlife Trust and St Dominic's Catholic Primary school.

Our Progress

- Plans for a promotional campaign on indoor office plants and air quality to coincide with the onset of autumn 2023.
- Plans for the distribution of wildflower seed packs to staff to encourage planting at home.

Lithium Battery Conference

- Members of the Service supported the NFCC Lithium Battery Conference held at the National Memorial Arboretum in October 2022. As the NFCC’s strategic lead for waste fires, our Chief Fire Officer facilitated the conference giving an overall assessment of the impact that lithium batteries are having upon the fire sector.

Waste management

- Staff feedback via waste and recycling survey.
- Working with our new waste contractor to provide recycling facilities at some of our sites.

We still face challenges in our journey to reduce our carbon footprint, but it is positive that there has been a reduction in the Service’s Carbon Footprint by 51 metric tonnes since 2021/2022.

- Business Miles - increased, 1 tonne more CO2e.
- Electricity Usage - decreased, 20 tonnes less CO2e.
- Diesel purchase - increased, 37 tonnes more CO2e.
- Gas usage - decreased, 69 tonnes less CO2e than 2021/22.

Collaborative Shared Estates

We have a building portfolio consisting of 35 premises. The portfolio consists of 21 Private Finance Initiative (PFI) buildings and 14 residual buildings. The PFI buildings are split across two outsourced contracts, which are managed from within the Estates Team; one contract consists of 10 buildings, whilst the other PFI contract is made up of 11 buildings. The remaining 14 residual buildings are maintained by an in-house facilities management team within the Estates Team.

The Estates Team have just completed the Abbots Bromley Fire Station refurbishment project and are now in the final design stage for Brewood Fire Station refurbishment. Once Brewood Fire Station design stage has been completed Tutbury Fire Station refurbishment design will be looked at and then all site major project refurbishments will have been completed.

Abbots Bromley Fire Station, built in the 1960s, has undergone a refurbishment to update its interior and make it more suitable for its purpose. The project began in August 2022 with the aim of providing a better working environment for the on-call firefighters.

The refurbishment includes various improvements such as a new kitchen, gym, watch office, communications room, locker rooms, PPE stowage room, and updated drainage facilities in the appliance bay.

Despite the ongoing refurbishment, operational activities were not affected during

the refurbishment with the on-call crew being able to respond to incidents as usual.



In line with the major refurbishment programme there are a number of other investment programmes being carried out across all residual fire stations to ensure buildings are continually maintained to a standard and facilities are fit for purpose. Last financial year saw the Estates Team deliver circa £700,000 worth of investment to many fire residual sites across various project streams. Over the 2023/2024 financial year, the team are aiming on delivering circa £1million+ worth of investment within the Fire Residual Estate.

We are committed to further reducing their carbon footprint in particular within the

building portfolio, currently the Estates Team are working with Commercial Services in the procurement of a consultancy practise to explore the viability of installing solar panels at our headquarters site at Pirehill. In addition to this, we will soon be installing eight Electric Vehicle charging points to various sites to enable an electrical vehicle pilot to be undertaken. The intention is to learn from the data we receive from the pilot to then review the scalability of such a project across the wider estate.

The Estates Team are working closely with the Staffordshire Commissioner’s office to build upon the successful collaborative building projects at Hanley and Tamworth, which sees Staffordshire Fire and Staffordshire Police working together and co-locating within the same building

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 body organisations and further opportunities are being explored at Uttoxeter, Kidsgrove, Stone, Kinver and Penkridge stations.



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

Reflections from the Commissioner

“This has certainly been a very busy year for Staffordshire Fire & Rescue Service. We’ve seen a lot of the things that were included in the strategic plan, such as the challenges of climate change, and the fire risks associated with waste and environmental crime, place considerable demands on the Service.

With summer’s record-breaking high temperatures, Staffordshire suffered its fair share of open land fires, and some of our important heritage buildings were sadly lost to fire, including The Leopard Hotel in Burslem.

I’ve been impressed by the way the Service has risen to all of these challenges, and also by the willingness of teams to embrace new ways to keep our communities safe, particularly around health.

This was a priority in my Fire & Rescue Plan, and under the leadership of the Chief Fire Officer, the Service is seeking out innovative ways to use its wealth of expertise and capability.

In the east of the county, for example, there has been a trial for a Falls Response Service, to support the NHS in responding to calls

from people who have fallen. This vital work, intervening at an early stage, can help prevent injuries, keep people in their own homes and reduce the need for hospital stays or moving into care.

In Burton, a Control the Bleed kit has been installed at the fire station – a simple but clever idea which equips users with the equipment and instructions to potentially save a life.

The government’s White Paper will undoubtedly bring more changes for fire and rescue, but Staffordshire is ahead of the curve and the discussions around it reflect the conversations I’ve already been having with the Service. As one of the first areas to be given governance of fire alongside police, Staffordshire has a lot of knowledge and experience to contribute nationally, and I’m eager to see what will come out of the final paper.

The Service faces a challenging financial future, with the rising costs associated with inflation and pay settlements exceeding what has been funded by government. We’ll be consulting all firefighters and staff on any proposals to help us prepare the Service to meet these challenges”.

Our plans for 2023/24

The drivers for our planning are the

priorities in our **Safety Plan 2020-2024**, the Staffordshire Commissioner’s Fire and Rescue Plan 2021 – 2024, reports from Government and His Majesty’s Inspectorate of Fire & Rescue Services and national issues across the sector.

Departments and service delivery groups set departmental objectives in their delivery plans, which support the strategic priorities. Managers are held to account for delivery against their plans at regular performance management meetings and at Service governance boards.

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.

Management & governance of the Safety Plan

The Service has recently received a grading of ‘**Substantial Assurance**’ from an independent audit conducted by RSM Risk Assurance Services.

As a part of this audit, RSM have reviewed the consultation activity, governance, and reporting arrangements in place that the Service utilises to gain assurance regarding the Service’s performance against the **Safety Plan 2020-2024**. This was reviewed at both an operational and strategic level; and included the overall management of the **Safety Plan 2020-2024**, as well as the planning processes for future updates.

The following comments were provided by RSM in conclusion of this audit:

‘Taking account of the issues identified, the Authority can take substantial assurance that the controls upon which the organisation relies to manage the identified area are suitably designed, consistently applied and operating effectively.’

Home Office fire statistics

Our Performance and Assurance Team gathers data and prepares an annual response to the

Home Office. The Home Office is responsible for fire services in England and maintains a dedicated webpage called Fire Statistics, where it publishes detailed information on incidents attended by fire and rescue services. The data used for these statistical publications is sourced from the online Incident Recording System (IRS).

These publications offer valuable insights into fire and rescue incidents, fatalities, casualties, causes of fires, non-fire incidents, and response times, providing a comprehensive overview of the fire sector’s performance and activities in England.

Service availability

Service Availability refers to the percentage of time that a fire appliance is available to respond to incidents. It is calculated based on the availability of fire appliances at whole-time, on-call and day duty fire stations. Factors such as insufficient crew numbers, equipment defects, or training events can contribute to the unavailability of an appliance.

Whole-time fire stations have firefighters stationed at the station around the clock. On-call fire stations are covered by on-call firefighters and are not staffed 24/7. Day duty fire stations operate with a combination of on-call, with whole-time crewing during day shift periods.

The Service Availability metric helps assess the readiness and availability of fire appliances to effectively respond to incidents.

Between October 2022 and March 2023, the average Service availability was 60.63%. This is slightly lower compared to the same period in the previous year, which was 62.34%, and significantly lower compared to October 2020 – March 2021, which was 70.58%.

Several factors can affect the ability of the Fire Service to respond to incidents. The main contributory factor for appliance unavailability at on-call stations is the number of on-call crew available, and the number of those on-call crew that have the necessary operational training and qualifications to allow

Our Progress

a deployment to an incident. This is the largest factor affecting Total Service Availability.

Service Response times

Service response times are measured monthly and reflect the time taken for the first fire appliance to arrive at an incident from the moment it is mobilised by Fire Control. The total average response time is calculated from all fire appliances at whole-time, on-call and day duty fire stations that have been mobilised to incidents within the month.

Between October 2022 and March 2023, the average Service response time to incidents is recorded as 9 minutes 38 seconds. In the same period in the previous year, this was recorded as 9 minutes 47 seconds and between October 2020 – March 2021 this was recorded as 9 minutes 7 seconds.

Service Response standards

Response standards are based on achieving arrival at an incident within a given time using the criteria below. The Service looks to achieve a target of 80% of all calls passing the target threshold for response time within the county based upon the arrival time that is determined by the understanding of risk.

High Risk Areas

Arrival within 8 minutes

Medium Risk Areas

Arrival within 10 minutes

Low Risk Areas

Arrival within 18 minutes

Areas of the county have been classified as High, Medium or Low risk based on a geographical analysis made up of the following factors and risk indicators:

- Frequency of life risk incidents
- Limiting long term illness
- Rented accommodation
- Index of multiple deprivation factors
- Population density

- Number of lone elderly persons & single parents

Between October 2022 and March 2023, the average percentage pass rate is recorded at 84.01%

In the same period in the previous year this was recorded as 84.70% and between October 2020 to March 2021 this was recorded as 85.53%

The period of June to August 2022 was noted as a time of spate conditions nationally, with fire services receiving high levels of demand for attendance at secondary outdoor fires in particular during the period.

State of Fire Report 2022

The latest **State of Fire and Rescue – The Annual Assessment of Fire and Rescue Services in England 2022** was published in January 2023. In his annual assessment, Andy Cooke, His Majesty’s Chief Inspector of Fire & Rescue Services, expressed disappointment that only two out of six recommended reforms for the fire service had been implemented.

He called for collaboration between the Home Office, Local Government Association, National Fire Chiefs Council, and trade unions to reform pay negotiations and reduce the risk of industrial action. He also highlighted the need for improved culture within the services, citing instances of bullying, harassment, and discrimination. He emphasised the urgency of reform and the importance of addressing all recommendations to provide the best possible service to the public. We talk about the HMICFRS report on values and culture in the fire sector, which was published on the 30th March 2023, later in this report.

The remaining recommendations include defining the role of fire and rescue services, reducing unjustifiable variation, reviewing pay and conditions, and granting Chief Fire Officers operational independence.

The issues we face now and in the years ahead reinforces the need to work together with our communities, our people, businesses, and many other partners to continue delivering an

excellent service in what are likely to be the most challenging times we have faced.

His Majesty’s Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) inspection

The HMICFRS published its inspection report– Effectiveness, efficiency and people 2021/22 – Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Service on the 27th July 2022. The full report is publicly available on the **HMICFRS website**. The inspection looked at how efficient we are and how effective we are at keeping people safe from fire and other risks and how well we look after our people.

The report acknowledged that we are ‘Good’ at being effective in understanding and preventing fires and other risks and responding to major and multi-agency incidents.

Inspectors also said we are ‘Good’ at identifying people in our communities who are most at risk from fire and we work 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.

We were also rated as ‘Good’ in how we make the Service affordable now and in the future. We continuously look for ways to improve our effectiveness and efficiency and in doing so we need to make sure that we make best use of new technologies to transform the way we provide our services.

The Inspectors rated us ‘Good’ at getting the right people with the right skills, managing performance and developing leaders as well as how we look after the health, safety and wellbeing of our staff.

However, there were a number of areas in which we were rated as ‘Requires Improvement’. Whilst disappointing, 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 made some recommendations in the report, and identified 20 ‘Areas for

Improvement’, which the Service has now created an action plan to address. The progress of this action plan is scrutinised, both internally through Service governance boards, and by the Commissioner.

Firefighter Apprenticeships - OFSTED Inspection Programme

The Service currently has 40 firefighters on the Operational Firefighter Apprenticeship programme,

The Apprenticeship programme runs for approximately two years and the learners receive structured training, coaching and development to equip them for the role of a competent operational firefighter at Level 3.

In May 2022, the Office for Standards in Education, Children’s Services and Skills (OFSTED) carried out a full inspection regarding our Operational Firefighter Apprenticeship provision. This follows a previous monitoring visit in 2019 whereby the Service was recognised as having made ‘Substantial Progress’.

Four key areas within the Education Inspection Framework were considered during the inspection:

- Quality of Education
- Behaviours and Attitudes
- Personal Development
- Leadership and Management

The Service has been awarded an overall judgement of ‘Good’ for apprenticeships, with some ‘Outstanding’ areas of note for ‘Behaviour and Attitudes’ and ‘Personal Development’. A full copy of the **Inspection of Staffordshire Commissioner Fire and Rescue Authority** report is available on OFSTED’s website.





Overall Effectiveness	Good
The Quality of Education	Good
Behaviour and Attitudes	Outstanding
Personal Development	Outstanding
Leadership and Management	Good
Apprenticeships	Good

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

Service transformation programme

Service transformation is necessary to ensure that Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Service can deliver ‘a modern, efficient, and sustainable level of service to the public’ that prioritises the safety of both our staff and our communities. The Deputy Chief Fire Officer oversees the Service’s Transformation Programme, which aligns to our priority of ‘Service Reform’ and the Commissioner’s ‘flexible and responsive service’ and a ‘fire service for tomorrow’.

A Transformation Board was formed in February 2022, with representatives from various areas of the Service. Its purpose is to investigate ways to transform the Service and ensure its financial sustainability in the long run. The Board meets regularly to monitor and evaluate progress through an action plan, while also providing recommendations through the relevant governance channels.

A number of the work streams that are

aligned with the Service’s Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) have already been considered and completed such as a high-level management restructure, the change to a minimum of four staff on whole-time fire engines, a review of operational exercises, review of incident command and outreach training and the ‘On-call Nine-Point Plan’ to improve availability of fire engines and crews.

As part of our regular operations, we have also taken into account additional work streams. For instance, we have been working on a ‘Clean Concept’ initiative to minimise operational staff’s exposure to contaminants from fires. Additionally, we have initiated a project to review the standards and accreditation for our fire investigation officers.

There are also a number of projects nearing completion such as:

- Roving resource concept in South Staffordshire
- Enhanced Rescue Pumps
- Three rider trial

This work is transforming the Service to ensure that it delivers even better outcomes for our communities and at the same time means that the Service is working more efficiently. It is estimated that the delivery of the transformation programme will achieve a recurring saving of circa £1 million for the Service.

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 risks 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, and a global parts shortage it is estimated that the ERPs chassis will arrive in Service in April 2024.

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 rescues. New hydraulic rescue tools have been trialled along with an extensive list of new equipment.

Three rider trial

The transformation work on more flexible on-call mobilising is being completed with a view to respond to a number of predetermined incidents, by utilising our on-call crews to prevent the escalation of incidents and to reduce the risk of the public putting themselves at harm. The concept is to mobilise a crew of three to make quicker interventions to improve community safety when they would otherwise not have been mobilised.

The concept is not about reducing costs, its actually an investment aimed at improving outcomes for our communities, while using our staff to the best of their abilities in the most effective and efficient manner. A crew of three will have the potential to implement lifesaving actions throughout the whole of Staffordshire. They will be used as the closest appliance available and be sent to a range of incident types.

Work is taking place alongside Fire Control and our systems integration team to ensure that the correct mobilisation criteria will be achieved with the selected crewing requirements, the crewing requirements are a Service priority for maintaining firefighter safety. In the future, our on-call crews will respond to a number of incidents types, which they would have previously not attended.

Crews will still be required to maintain a minimum requirement, which will include a suitably trained crew of three, including breathing apparatus wearers, a qualified level one Commander and a separate Emergency Fire Appliance Driver.

Consultation with key stakeholders including representative bodies and all operational crews has taken place. Our Deputy Chief Fire Officer delivered a vlog to provide

feedback on questions that were asked to the Transformation Board regarding three rider crewing mobilisations. The Service intends to start a trial in the summer of 2023 for approximately six months.

Clean Concept

The Clean Concept principle is a drive toward reducing exposure of our crews to post-fire contaminants. This will be achieved through reducing, as far as is reasonably practicable, contamination of people, appliances, equipment and premises.



The principle is fully supported by both the organisation and the representative bodies alike. It is important to understand that all staff, not just operational colleagues, are

potentially affected by these contaminants if they are unwittingly transported from the incident ground to our workplaces.

Through a process of Cleaning, Containing and Controlling we can reduce the incidence of contaminants reaching our appliances and workplaces. A working group has been in place for over a year with representatives from across the Service and representative bodies working together to identify how best to achieve ‘Clean Concept’.

The group have identified that some actions are low cost and easy to implement whereas others may have higher costs and/or take longer to plan for. They have categorised these actions into three distinct phases for implementation.

Staff may already have noticed some small, but significant, changes. The concept of ‘Shower within the hour’ for those exposed to smoke should now be well embedded on stations. Wipes for hands/face/neck – areas believed to be most susceptible to the effects of personal contamination have been provided for all appliances and officers’ cars. Equipment wipes have also been provided, as have bags

and cable ties to isolate equipment that cannot be effectively cleaned at the incident ground. Guidance has been issued to all staff and is readily available on our intranet.

The Service are committed to reducing the risks associated with post fire contaminants and this will be further demonstrated as we move into phase two and three. For this to work effectively we all need to play our part in reducing post-fire contaminants.

On-call Support Officers

Our On-Call Support Officers are the team who work with our on-call firefighters to help them to improve availability of our fire engines and other resources.

On-call firefighters are an integral part of the Service and help bolster our front-line services. The On-Call Support Officers work alongside other departments like Human Resources, Learning & Development and Corporate Communications to get people interested, through the doors, trained and available to crew their local appliances.

The trial initially began with three officers but has grown and developed into a permanent team of six as demand and interest in becoming an on-call firefighter grew. We have also seen growth in our front-line on-call numbers since the trial began.

Roving resource concept in South Staffordshire

In 2022 we examined incident data across a number of years which suggested that one way to improve efficiency would be to take a look at how we respond to incidents in ‘the South Staffordshire Leg’, starting at Brewood and working our way further south with Codsall, Wombourne and Kinver.

Over the past few years, maintaining appliance availability in these areas has become increasingly challenging for several reasons, including crewing models, recruitment and retention of staff, and reliance on neighbouring services. To address these challenges, the Roving Resource Concept was

introduced under the Transformation Board. Its goal is to place skilled personnel in the right locations at the right times, improving availability in South Staffordshire.

The concept was initially implemented as a 12-week trial in August 2022 and yielded positive results, such as increased weekend resource availability, improved staff morale, and investment in personnel. It also enabled education and advice to communities and enhanced recruitment and retention.

Following the conclusion of the initial trial, a full report was produced highlighting the positive outcomes and the Service Transformation Board voted to continue the trial in 2023 for a further 24 weeks, where it will be reviewed in June 2023.

“If we needed a driver to make Codsall’s fire engine available and Brewood had a driver available on-call during this time period and it did not affect the crewing at Brewood, this person would be given the opportunity to move to Codsall to cover in return for a single hour payment.”

Core Code of Ethics



In December 2022, we made the decision to transition from our current Cultural Framework to the Core Code of Ethics, which encompasses five key ethical principles (above)

These principles serve as a foundation for encouraging positive conduct and addressing inappropriate behaviour within our framework. The ethical principles have been developed specifically for Fire and Rescue Services by the National Fire Chiefs Council, the Local Government Association, and the Association

of Police and Crime Commissioners. The reintegration of the Code of Ethics began in the New Year, with a weekly spotlight on each value in our internal newsletter, iNews. We have assigned a Principal Officer Champion for each value, and they have shared personal statements about their understanding of the value and their commitment to it. We are incorporating the Core Code of Ethics into all our policies and documents as they are updated, including the new Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP).

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.

Values and Culture

Throughout the year, various communications were sent to our staff highlighting the importance of our values and culture, and encouraging open discussions. These efforts stemmed from an internal culture review, which resulted in the creation of Our Culture Report back in October 2021.

The final report was made available to all staff members for reading and discussion. It provides an unbiased account of our staff’s experiences and serves as a starting point for a Service-wide conversation on how we can enhance our culture in areas where it may not meet expectations. The report does not provide solutions but prompts us to explore opportunities for improvement.

Following the release of the Independent Culture Review of London Fire Brigade in

Our Progress

November 2022, all staff received an email encouraging them to review the report. The purpose was to raise awareness of the reporting and support channels accessible to them should they have any concerns. These resources include an independent external reporting tool, support from union bodies, and the Service's whistle-blowing policy.

Our intention has been to genuinely embrace and reflect on what we are being told by our own staff, at the same time acknowledging the current national context.

In late January 2023, the news of investigations into staff at Dorset and Wiltshire Fire Service prompted internal communications to all our staff. In February, during face-to-face briefings, we dedicated a section to encourage our staff to discuss and explore ways they can positively influence our culture on a daily basis.

Following the broadcast of a Radio 4 programme highlighting misogyny in the fire and rescue service, all staff were requested to listen to the recording and reflect on it within their teams. Teams were then asked to provide a summary of their discussions to the Assistant Chief Fire Officer, with an option for individuals to share their personal experiences if they so wished. The purpose of this initiative was to foster open and honest discussions about difficult issues, whilst respecting individual confidentiality. We received feedback from nearly all our teams, and summaries of these discussions have been shared with all of the Principal Officers.

In March 2023, His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services released a spotlight **report on Values and Culture** in fire and rescue services. The report included a set of recommendations for the sector, government, and individual services.

The report was again brought to the attention of staff with a face-to-face briefing request to discuss what we can all do individually, and as a Service, to foster a healthy and supportive culture in line with the Core Code of Ethics.

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 2020-2024** 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.

A diverse, healthy, and highly professional workforce

The Service recognises the importance of attracting, developing, and retaining a diverse workforce. To support this, we have invested in specialised positions such as a Positive Action Coordinator and an Insights and Engagement Manager. They are working on development plans to monitor and promote equality of opportunity and career progression within the Service.

The recently formed Workforce Planning Board provides oversight of Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) within the Service. The Board promotes discussion and understanding, accountability as well as influencing the approach to future considerations through the review of retirement profiles and our approach to recruitment.

Policy and strategy reviews are underway to ensure that cultural development, targeted attraction practices, and EDI issues are integrated into HR policies and procedures. The EDI Strategy will be aligned with the Community Risk Management Plan, and an

EDI Plan will be developed with specific and measurable goals.

EDI considerations extend to prevention and protection work in the community and CPD forums will raise awareness of specific EDI issues, including neurodiversity, menopause, prostate cancer, the Armed Forces Covenant, and People Impact Assessments. The EDI Plan will include events to promote wider social recognition, such as Pride events, LGBT History, Domestic Violence awareness, Black History, and Disability events.

Diversity within recruitment

The following information is taken from applicants applying for positions within the Service:

Of a total of 686 applications received between 1st April 2022 – 31st March 2023

- 4.5% Ethnic Minority and 2% Prefer not to say/not stated
- 23.1% Female and 9.5% Prefer not to say/not stated
- 4.7% Declared disability and 1.3% Prefer not to say/not stated
- 8% LGBTQ+ and 5.7% Prefer not to say/not stated

Since September 2022, the percentage of female employees in various positions within the Service has increased slightly from 18.81% to 19.25%. This translates to an additional seven female employees during that time.

The percentage of employees with disabilities has also seen a small increase from 1.80% to 1.88%, with one additional person self-identifying as having a disability.

To encourage diversity and support underrepresented groups, a Positive Action Coordinator has been hired to actively promote job applications from these groups. Efforts include visiting local schools, attending recruitment events, and building a database of interested individuals. Corporate Communications are also working to ensure that media from the Service appeals to a wider demographic.

Steps are being taken to recruit more whole-time firefighters, with a recruitment campaign planned for October 2023. Regular Work Force Planning Boards are pertinent

to keeping positive engagement strategies on track. This includes reviewing facilities at our Headquarters to create a welcoming environment for a diverse workforce.

Networks, including a Women's Group and a Menopause Group, are being established. Collaborative efforts with the Police on International Women's Day raised awareness of disabilities and support.

Occupational Health is working on a holistic approach to support current and new employees, with plans to advertise these efforts. The Service is also completing the Mental Health at Work Commitment, incorporating mental health support into induction and establishing a Neurodiversity Support Group. A Wellbeing Conference was held in April 2023 to raise awareness among Wellness Champions, and training for Mental Health First Aiders is scheduled for summer of 2023.

Uniformed Public Services

This academic year we looked to improve the way we engage with students studying Uniformed Public Services at colleges across the county. Our Positive Action Coordinator and Station Managers will deliver workshops highlighting the work we do to encourage more young people to make the fire service a career of choice. There will be a chance to discover more about the firefighter apprenticeship route; the role of the on-call firefighter and how to get involved; a demonstration of our response to a road traffic collision from initial attendance through to removing casualties safely;

Looking after our own health and wellbeing

Workforce sickness

Between October 2022 and March 2023, sickness absence has decreased across the Service. Among whole-time firefighters, the service ranks 8th out of 34 nationally, with an average of 4.74% of working days/shifts lost to sickness, compared to the national average of 6.4%. For Green book employees (support staff), the service ranks 19th, with 3.67% of working days/shifts lost, with the average being 3.7%.

Coronavirus remains the primary cause of

Our Progress

sickness absence for whole-time firefighters, accounting for 18.28% of lost days/shifts. Lower limb injuries have proportionally increased and become the main cause of sickness absence for on-call firefighters and support staff.

Initiatives such as wellbeing walks, yoga sessions, and other activities have been implemented, with a focus on supporting Stress Awareness Month in April 2023. Stress and anxiety are the fifth main cause of sickness absence across all employees. The Wellbeing event in April 2023 provided attendees with information on ways they can provide support and guidance on mental health to their colleagues. The Thrive App has been launched across the Service to support with mental health and anxiety.

The Thrive app, developed by psychiatrists, psychologists, and game developers, aims to promote mental health, identify issues early on, and support recovery. It offers various programs and sessions, including cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT), mindfulness, stress management, and educational courses. The app also includes daily check-ins and assessments to provide personalised support. Thrive ensures user data privacy and is independent from employers.

To further support mental health in the workplace, the service plans to engage "Mental Health First Aiders" who will provide initial mental health support, similar to trained First Aiders for physical ailments.

Occupational Health

Occupational health provides a range of services to support and assist employees. The department serves both Staffordshire Police and Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Service.

A triage process determines the appropriate support, and appointments can be conducted in-person or remotely. The team of counsellors and welfare officers provides free and confidential support for various issues, including work-related problems, bereavement, relationships, trauma, and mental health concerns.

Occupational health advisors, who are trained nurses, conduct sickness reviews, provide health advice, and can refer individuals to other Occupational Health services if necessary. Screening nurses, under the guidance of a clinical nurse lead, offer services such as pre-employment screening, health monitoring, vaccinations, and annual medicals for specific roles. They can also provide general health advice.

An Occupational Health Physician is also available to support medical reviews, pre-employment screenings, sickness reviews, and ill-health retirement assessments. External physiotherapists provide treatment, advice, and assistance for injuries, chronic injury management, and support with returning to work.

The wellbeing nurse organises events and initiatives on various health and wellbeing

topics and offers individual support and collaborates with internal networks and peer-led groups. The focus is on prioritising wellbeing, fostering open conversations and challenging stigmas to support a happy and healthy workforce.

Chaplain Service

We currently have eight Chaplains across the county who are able to offer pastoral care and support to all staff when they may need it. Chaplains are all volunteers and offer 24-hour support.

The service is not about religion it is about offering an extra support mechanism to staff with whatever situation they have, and it might not even be a work issue. Obviously, the chaplains can talk about faith if required.

Volunteers

We currently have **59** volunteers Service wide. Between 1st April 2022 and 31st March 2023, our volunteers contributed a total of 2,061.75 hours to the service. Our volunteer teams have supported us in many areas, at events and taken part in activities including Pride, town and county shows, charity car washes, fire station open days, operational training exercises and tending the Memorial Garden.



Response

- 9740 total incidents **UP 15%** from last year
- 832 road traffic collisions **UP 14%** from last year
- 408 accidental house fires **DOWN 7%** from last year
- 2266 small outdoor fires **UP 38%** from last year
- 4 accidental house fire deaths **UP 33%** from last year
- 17 accidental house fire injuries **DOWN 32%** from last year
- 151 accidental business fires **DOWN 2%** from last year
- 35 deliberate business fires **DOWN 27%** from last year

Protection

- 16 Enforcement Notices and 5 Prohibition Notices issued
- 417 full fire safety audits were carried out on those premises deemed most at risk

Health and Safety

- Injuries down to **30**, in comparison to **37** the previous year.
- Breakdown:**
- 7 struck against object
 - 4 manual handling
 - 2 slip, trip or fall
 - 7 struck by object
 - 3 fall from height
 - 1 musculoskeletal
 - 6 other

Prevention

- 13,056 Safe and Well visits **UP 264%** from last year

Human Resources

- Recruited:**
- 41 on-call firefighters
 - 18 wholetime firefighters
 - 28 support staff

Finance

Budget set at **£42.5m**,
Capital spend **£3.2m**.

Financial summary

The Staffordshire Commissioner oversees the financial aspects of the Service and handles the affairs of the Authority. Their main objective is to ensure that appropriate measures are in place to achieve value for money whilst maintaining financial stability. They also challenge the Service to be efficient and effective in its operations.

The revenue budget for the year 2022/23 was approved by the Staffordshire Commissioner at £42.5m in February 2022, which included a Band D council tax of £80.35, an increase of 1.99% for the year (3p per week).

Despite a challenging year marked by significant cost increases and pay inflation, the total revenue spend for the year closed in line with the budget. This year-end position included additional pay pressures with a pay increase for operational staff of 7% following the final agreement with the Fire Brigade Union membership. The agreed fire staff award resulted in an average increase of over 5%, exceeding the initial pay budget assumption of 3%. It is important to highlight that all pay awards for fire operational and support staff are determined by national negotiating bodies.

Whole-time overtime costs were influenced by the implementation of the approved minimum crewing requirement of four riders on a whole-time fire engine. This measure has helped offset the impact of the additional pay award. As a result of this change, there were savings of £0.6m in overtime and crewing deficiency costs compared to the previous year. Additionally, lower headcount and operational activity led to savings in on-call costs compared to the budget and a number of support staff vacancies have been carried during the year.

Non-pay costs exceeded the budget, primarily due to higher expenses in key areas such as fuel, supplies, and services, which were affected by inflationary pressures. The unitary charge (UC) cost also rose due to the annual increase in the variable cost component based on RPIx. On the positive side, the increase in interest rates resulted in an additional £0.4m of interest receivable during the year, and the income from the S31 grant for business rates was better than expected.

The Capital Programme expenditure for the year amounted to £3.2m and whilst this was lower than budget good progress was made, particularly in the procurement of two new Aerial Ladder Platforms (ALP) and two Heavy Rescue tenders, all of which are expected to be delivered during 2023/2024. Additionally, a £1.5m investment was made in new operational fire kit, and the successful completion of the £0.5m refurbishment project at Abbots Bromley Fire Station. This investment was supported by £1.5m from earmarked reserves.

The cash position closed at £16.9m and is cumulatively £8.4m better than budget. This was mainly due to the Firefighters' Pension Top-up Grant being £0.9m higher than expected, additional grants of £2.1m, and a lower capital programme expenditure compared to the budget. Cash remains in a very healthy position and new borrowing will not be required during 2023/2024.

In summary, despite a very challenging year, the financial position has been well managed, and the total revenue remained within the approved budget set at the start of the year.

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: sets out the responsibilities of the Authority and the Treasurer for the accounts

Annual Governance Statement: assesses the adequacy of the Authority's governance arrangements and suggests areas for improvement

Statement of Accounting Policies: defines the basis for recognising, measuring, and disclosing transactions in the accounts

Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement: summarises the income and

expenditure related to the Authority's services for the financial year 2022-2023, including all recognised gains and losses

Movement in Reserves Statement: reconciles the Income and Expenditure Account with General Fund Balances, taking into account contributions to reserves committed for future expenditure

Balance Sheet: Presents the Authority's financial position as of 31st March 2023; and

Cash Flow Statement: Summarises the cash inflows and outflows throughout the year.

Once approved the Statement of Accounts will be published on our website at:

www.staffordshirefire.gov.uk

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



Emerging Issues

Climate Change and Extreme Weather Conditions

The year 2022 saw the UK's first ever red weather warning as heatwave temperatures soared to 40.3 degrees, the highest ever recorded in Britain. The Met Office advises that climate change is likely to mean hotter, drier summers and warmer, wetter winters. Extreme events such as heatwaves and heavy rainfall could become more frequent and intense meaning more flooding and wildfires, thus having a direct impact on our frontline services.

Between April and September 2022 in Staffordshire, we saw a 46.67% increase in the number of secondary fires attended compared to the same period in 2021, and a 64.86% increase from the same period in 2019.

In 2022 Staffordshire recorded 21 'wildfires', with 13 of these incidents requiring the attendance of five or more fire appliances. Of these incidents 15 involved an area of fire damage over 200 square metres. This presents us with a significant challenge in being able to resource additional demand on our services.

Considerations are not only limited to front line crews, but to the Service as a whole. Areas such as risk and contingency planning, reviewing and adapting operational training requirements and allocation of resources, and engaging with the communities of Staffordshire and neighbouring fire services are essential components of preparing for future periods of unpredictable and extreme weather conditions.

We have introduced new equipment and adopted the use of technology to help us be more flexible in the way we respond to incidents. At Service Headquarters we have dedicated equipment which can be mobilised to incidents featuring a 656ft wildfire hose, backpacks and a high-pressure blower on board to enable crews to deal with serious wildfires. The equipment can also be converted to extract water to support in areas of flooding..

As a Service, we are taking a proactive approach to climate change and we are monitoring our own **Environmental and Sustainability Strategy**, which sets our plans to work towards carbon neutrality and to ensure environmental concerns are embedded in all future considerations.

Special Service calls

The most notable area of increased demand for the Service over the period of October 2022 to March 2023 has been concerned with attendance at Special Service Call incidents. A 14.50% increase is noted from the number of special service calls attended between October to March 2022, and an 11.60% increase is noted from the number of incidents attended in the same period from 2019.

Special service calls are defined as any incident, which falls outside the scope of the normal function of fire attendance. These incidents include both emergency and non-emergency response.

Examples of special service calls can be animal rescue, hazardous materials, road spillages, gaining entry and exit in emergencies and assisting other emergency services and the military with environmental catastrophe such as flooding.

A large proportion of these special service calls were noted in December 2022 as a result of very cold weather and a short thawing period causing pipes within residential premises and also mains water supplies to freeze and to break. Many of these incidents were concerned with assisting vulnerable or elderly residents directly, or by supporting other agencies to gain entry to flooded unoccupied premises in order to isolate mains electricity and water.

Horizon Scanning, volatility and cost pressures

There are serious concerns across all the public sector about the financial situation because of high inflation, pay awards, pension costs and increasing running costs. The cost of the Private Finance Initiative (PFI) contracts,

the increasing cost of fuel, insurance and capital expenditure are all adding pressure on the Service's budgets.

The Service paused the proposed project to repurpose our Stafford site due to increasing project costs. Consequently, the Service has been unable to benefit from the expected on-going savings and capital receipt had the project gone ahead as planned.

The uncertainty of pay awards for 2022 for employees is another significant factor because any unfunded pay awards mean that the Service would need to find additional efficiencies within existing budgets. This could mean a reduction to front-line services to the public and as a result, a remodelling of the Service's Medium Term Financial Strategy is underway.

It is therefore appropriate that any plans and projects remain dynamic and reviewed in light of these economic changes and the growing cost pressure on the Medium Term Financial Strategy, which at the start of the 2022/2023 financial year was expected to see a deficit of around £2 million by 2025. This pressure is additional to the requirements to ensure that the Service is fit for tomorrow; taking into account the Staffordshire Commissioner's **Fire and Rescue Plan 2021-2024**, the HMICFRS inspection outcomes and the Government's white paper **Reforming Our Fire and Rescue Service**.



Tell us what you think

We value your feedback on the content of this Statement of Assurance. If you have any thoughts, suggestions, or feedback, please feel free to share them with us.

Planning for the future

As we approach the conclusion of our **Safety Plan 2020-2024**, we are actively working on our new Community Risk Management Plan, which will guide our activities in the future. It is essential for us to involve our communities to help us shape these plans effectively.

We encourage involvement from individuals, partners, and local community groups interested in contributing to the development of Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Service's future. If you would like to take part in the consultation on our new Community Risk Management Plan, or comment on this Statement of Assurance, you can email us at consultation@staffordshirefire.gov.uk or visit our website, www.staffordshirefire.gov.uk. You will also find additional information about our services and activities on our website.

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

On-call firefighters are paid, part-time firefighters who respond to emergencies just like full-time firefighters. They often have another main job and fit their on-call role around it. They can respond to emergencies from either their home or workplace.



Alert 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.

On-call firefighters play a vital role in delivering efficient and effective emergency services to the communities of Staffordshire. As well as responding to emergencies, they take part in community fire safety initiatives in their local area. This includes visiting people in their homes to carry out Safe and Well checks and educating school pupils about fire safety.

If you or someone you know lives, or works, close to one of our on-call fire stations and wants to become an on-call firefighter and make a difference in the community, then we are recruiting. More information can be found on our external website: www.staffordshirefire.gov.uk/careers/on-call-firefighters

Contact

Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Service Headquarters
Pirehill
Stone
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ST15 0BS



www.staffordshirefire.gov.uk

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Staffordshire
Fire and Rescue Service
preventing • protecting • responding

STAFFORDSHIRE POLICE, FIRE AND CRIME PANEL

13 November 2023

WORK PROGRAMME PLANNING 2023-24

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
2023/24	Draft Work Programme
3 July 2023 10am (moved from 26/06/23)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appointment of Chairman • Appointment of Vice-Chairman • Public Questions • Decisions taken by the Commissioner 9P&C 005-007 and F&R 001) • 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 2022/23 • Consideration of the Commissioners Annual Report 2023/24
3 July 2023 12.30pm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Confirmation Hearing – Section 151 (Chief Finance Officer)
25 August not a public meeting	Training event on the role of the panel

4 October – not a public meeting	Meet the commissioner – Police HQ
10 October 2023 2.30pm (moved from 25 September 2023)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public Questions • Police and Crime Plan / Fire and Rescue Plan Update
13 November 2023 10am	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public Questions • MTFS/Budget Update – Policing Service • MTFS/Budget Update - Fire and Rescue Service • Fire and Rescue Annual Assurance Statement
5 February 2024 2.30pm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PFCC's proposed Police Budget and Precept 2023/24 • Police Misconduct and Complaint Regulations 2020 – annual report • Annual Conference for PFCP's - report
12 February 2024 10am	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consideration of the PFCCs proposed Fire and Rescue Budget and Precept 2024/5 • Fire and Rescue Service Safety Plan 2020-2024 Update Report
19 February 2024 10am	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If required, further consideration of proposed Police and/or Fire and Rescue Budget and Precept 2023/24
22 April 2023 10am	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TBC
Items to be scheduled if/when appropriate.	

J Tradewell (Secretary to the Panel)
Contact Officers: Mandy Pattinson
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