

Productivity and Efficiency Plan

2025 - 2026



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About the Plan

This Productivity and Efficiency Plan sets out the ongoing financial position for the Authority and illustrates the recent transformation savings that have been delivered by the Service and presents future work that will contribute positively to improving efficiency and drive productivity. The Fire and Rescue [National Framework](#) sets a requirement that Fire and Rescue Authorities (FRAs) produce and publish annual efficiency plans. There is a specific requirement from the Minister of State for Crime, Policing and Fire that in 2023/24, 2024/25 and 2025/26, FRAs produce plans that not only cover planned efficiencies, but also their plans for increasing productivity.

As part of the 2021/22 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 to increase productivity by 3%. This 2025/26 Productivity and Efficiency Plans will help the NFCC, LGA and Home Office to collate evidence and to assess likely progress at national level against the agreed Spending Review goals.

This document has been produced as a requirement of the funding settlement from the Home Office and is published on the Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Service website so that it can be scrutinised by members of the public and the council tax payers within Staffordshire and Stoke on Trent.

This document contains links to other relevant documents and websites and should be read in conjunction with other publications.

Medium Term Financial Strategy

The Authority's strategy for the provision of services is driven by the approved Community Risk Management Plan. The Plan has been developed using integrated risk management planning methods and is designed to conform to the Government's guidance in relation to the preparation of integrated risk management plans. A [new Community Risk Management Plan](#) has been released for the period 2025 to 2028. The financial year 2025/26 is the first year of the updated plan.

The Community Risk Management Plan and this Productivity and Efficiency Plan is supported by the approved Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS), which sets out how the Authority will fund the plan. The MTFS is based on a number of assumptions, which are detailed within this



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Funding Assumptions

The following table sets out the assumptions the Authority is making about funding up to 2027-28 and includes the assumptions including the year 2024/25. The budget year is the sixth single year settlement from Government which makes future planning increasingly constrained to the short term alongside the impact of rising cost, pay inflation, and increased pension contributions.

Settlement Funding Assessment (All figures are £000 unless stated)	2024 25 Forecast	2025 26 Budget	2026 27 Plan	2027 28 Plan
Baseline Funding - Business Rates / Top Up	10428	10547	10758	10974
RSG	7489	7621	7774	7929
Settlement Funding Assessment Total	17917	18168	18532	18903
Council Tax Forecast				
Band D Council Tax (£)	86.77	91.77	93.60	95.46
Actual / Assumed Council Tax base increase on previous year	469	320	339	349
Yearly Council Tax Precept Increase	922	1848	683	701
Collection Fund (council tax & business rates)	-4	-488	339	252
Total Council Tax Income	32148	33828	35188	36239
Council Tax Band D Precept Increase (%)	3.0%	5.8%	2.0%	2.0%
Growth in Council Tax Base Yield to Previous Year (%)	1.6%	1.0%	1.0%	1.0%
TOTAL REVENUE BUDGET £000s	50065	51996	53720	55142

The level of RSG the Authority received decreased by just over 50% between 2015-16 and 2019-20. The Authority had frozen council tax between 2010-11 and 2014-15 with a Band D for Staffordshire and Stoke on Trent held at £67.64 during this time. The Authority is now more reliant upon the funding raised through Council Tax (65%), and through the receipt of Business Rates (local and top-up 20%), with Revenue Support Grant increased to 15% of funding following the consolidation of the £1.7m Firefighters Pension Grant in 2024/25 as part of the Local Government Finance Settlement.



Revenue Budget 2024/25

The following table sets out the budget for 2025/26 and breaks down sources of income and planned spend. The budget for 2025/26 and level of council tax increase was approved by the Staffordshire Commissioner on 10 February 2025 following a presentation to the Police Fire and Crime Panel.

The budget for 2025/26 included a decision to raise the Precept by £5 (5.8%).

	Budget 2024/25	Budget 2025/26	Year on Year Change
	£000s	£000s	£000s
Pay			
Pay Costs	31,653	33,520	1,866
Other Employee Costs	2,600	2,666	66
Total Pay	34,253	36,185	1,932
Non Pay			
Premises Costs	5,092	4,687	(404)
Transport Costs	1,044	1,139	96
Supplies & Services Costs	9,050	9,865	815
CFS Costs and Initiatives	340	320	(20)
Total Non Pay	15,525	16,012	486
Income			
Income - General	(5,510)	(4,525)	985
Income - non recurring	(716)	(898)	(182)
Interest Receivable	(541)	(608)	(67)
Total Income	(6,767)	(6,031)	736
Capital charges	2,343	2,217	(126)
Interest Payable	720	723	3
PFI Unitary Charge	4,114	4,220	107
Total Capital Charges	7,176	7,160	(16)
Total Revenue before Reserves	50,188	53,326	3,139
Transfer to/(from) Reserves	(123)	(1,330)	(1,207)
Total Revenue Budget	50,065	51,996	1,932



Revenue Budget and MTFS Narrative

Following the Police Fire and Crime Panel meeting on 10th February 2025, the Revenue Budget for 2025/26 was approved by the Staffordshire Commissioner at £52 million. This budget included a £5 increase in Council Tax, raising the Band D rate to £91.77, which is approximately £1.76 per week. This increase was in line with the Council Tax referendum limit set at £5. The Local Government Finance Settlement for 2025/26 has unfortunately introduced several new challenges, leading to a significantly worse financial outlook for 2025/26 and into the medium term than anticipated. The settlement included the loss of approximately £0.9 million in grant funding for 2025/26 (Funding Guarantee and Special Services Grant), which has been reallocated to other public sector authorities. Additionally, the early removal of the Airwave grant funding has resulted in a total funding cut of £1 million.

The budget also accounted for the National Insurance increase announced within the Chancellor's Budget at the end of October 2024. Based on the grant information from the Home Office, only 53% of this increase will be covered by additional grants. Unfortunately, this results in further additional budget pressure of £275,000.

In addition to the above the Council Tax base increase within Staffordshire and Stoke on Trent, which includes the growth through new domestic properties, has weakened and some local billing authorities have experienced issues collecting council tax this year resulting in a collection fund deficit position. In total funding for the Authority has increased for 2025/26 by £1.9m, but net costs have increased by £3.1m resulting in a growing budget gap for 25/26 and 26/27 that must now be addressed.

In order to deal with this medium-term financial position, the Commissioner has tasked the Service with achieving an additional £1 million in recurring savings by 2028/29. This will ensure a balanced revenue position into the medium term. Deputy Chief Fire Officer Glynn Luznyj will lead this next phase of work, building on the transformation efforts of the past two years.

The Authority needs to access its Earmarked Reserve during the next three years in order to balance this challenging financial position. The Reserve Strategy and Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) assume the use of £1.3m of reserves will be required during the next five-year period in addition the delivering the £1m saving target.

The Chief Fire Officer fully understands and acknowledges the challenges that lie ahead. He is confident in the ability of the Service to build upon the successful initiatives already delivered by the Transformation Board. It is crucial for the Service to continue to scenario plan



This proactive approach will ensure that a range of options are available for consideration by the Staffordshire Commissioner Fire and Rescue Authority.

The continued trend of single year financial settlements makes planning into the medium term very challenging. It is hoped that the two-year settlement proposal by the Government for 2026/27 and 2027/28 will provide more clarity over future funding and Council Tax flexibility.

Income

The Authority has a budgeted total income for 2025/26 of £6m, which includes recurring and non-recurring activities, as shown below:

INCOME						
£000						
	Actual 2023-24		Forecast 2024-25		Budget 2025-26	
	Recurrent	Non-recurrent	Recurrent	Non-recurrent	Recurrent	Non-recurrent
Income from charging policies	(334)		(275)		(266)	
Income from trading operations						
Income from shared premises	(863)		(720)		(837)	
Income from interest on investments	(943)		(1,001)		(608)	
Income from other sources	(3,607)	(900)	(4,477)	(1,033)	(3,422)	(898)
Total	(5,748)	(900)	(6,472)	(1,033)	(5,133)	(898)



Income from Charging Policies

This includes charges for the Primary Authority Scheme, fire reports completed, partnership income, collaboration recharges, the sale of fuel and equipment.

Income from Shared Premises

The Authority shares a number of sites with Staffordshire Police as part of the collaboration initiative drive by the Staffordshire Commissioner supported by the Chief Fire officer and Chief Constable. Shares sites exist across the Fire estate including Hanley, Tamworth, Chase Terrance, Stone, Kinver, Barton under Needwood and from April 2025 Uttoxeter with further shared sites under development.

Income from Investments

This is the income received from Investments made by the Authority based upon the cash held during the year. Interest return have increased significantly during the last two year in line with the Bank of England base rates.

Income from other Sources

Income includes the S31 grants receivable as part of the Business Rates system, the apprenticeship levy and government grants.



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Transformation savings and plans

Ongoing Service Transformation has been necessary to ensure that Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Service can continue to 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 that will consider how transformation can best support our priorities of our communities, our people and our environment.

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

A majority of work streams that are aligned with the current Service's Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) have already been considered and completed which included; 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.

The delivery of this transformation programme has achieved a recurring saving of over £1 million per annum for the Service. Service Transformation has also taken into account additional work streams. For instance, working on a 'Clean Concept' initiative to minimise operational staff's exposure to contaminants from fires. Additionally, a project to review the standards and accreditation for fire investigation officers.

The Transformation Board has now moved into the next phase and will be reviewing options to further transform the Service in order to increase productivity and drive efficiency. A review by an external partner has now been completed utilising up to date and historic risk and demand data in order to objectively review existing station locations and current shift patterns.

In order to balance the updated MTFS and meet the additional financial challenges the Commissioner has tasked the Service to deliver a further £1m on new recurring savings over this next four year period as part of the next phase of transformation. A saving target of £0.4m has been incorporated into the 2025/26 budget (of which £0.3m is pay, £0.1m non-pay).



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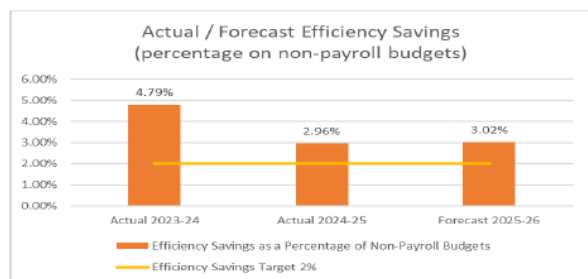


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Efficiency update

Fire and Rescue Services (FRSs) in England have a target to create 2% of non-pay efficiencies and to increase productivity by 3%. This Productivity and Efficiency Plan 2025/26 will help the NFCC, LGA and Home Office to collate evidence and to assess likely progress at national level against the agreed Spending Review goals.

The Authority have extracted the data from the Medium-Term Financial Strategy which clearly shows that the Authority is forecast to exceed the 2% of non-pay efficiencies as required by the Home Office using Annex C Fire efficiency model provided by Government. Savings are forecast to be in excess of the 2% target for all three years 2023/24, 2024/25 and 2025/26, as shown below:



EFFICIENCY DATA	Actual 2023-24	Actual 2024-25	Forecast 2025-26
Opening Revenue Expenditure Budget (Net)	48,172	50,065	51,996
Less Total Direct Employee Costs	(32,711)	(34,253)	(36,185)
Non Pay Budget	15,461	15,811	15,811
Efficiency Target (2% of non-pay budget)	309	316	316
Total Efficiency Savings	740	469	477
Efficiency Savings as a Percentage of Non-Payroll Budgets	4.79%	2.96%	3.02%
Efficiency Savings Target	2.00%	2.00%	2.00%
Over/(Under)	2.79%	0.96%	1.02%



The Commercial Service Team provide a shared service across Police, Fire and the Office of the Staffordshire Commissioner and is focussed upon making a valued and measurable contribution towards the overall commercial performance of each organisation, therefore contributing to the achievement of its strategic direction and business imperatives and where possible deliver procurement savings and efficiencies.

The Service has also moved to the Fire and Rescue Indemnity Company (FRIC) from April 2024 delivering savings and efficiencies for the provision of insurance services. HMICFRS have recognised FRIC as providing value for money and a cost-effective solution to Fire related insurance risks.

The Service has also continued to build on existing partnerships such as our Fire and Health Partnership activities where we work with the Integrate Care Board (ICB) and Midland Partnership Foundation Trust (MPFT) in providing a Falls Response Service and in December 2023 a new Home from Hospital service was launched. These two initiatives are providing improved outcomes to some of the most vulnerable people within our communities.

Through collaborative working with the Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Integrated Care Board (SSOTICB) a Falls Response Team was established on 14 November 2022 and the service went live on 7 December 2022 initially for a 6-month pilot period. The initiative involves SFRS personnel attending and resolving falls calls across Staffordshire. The team are dispatched by the NHS-led Unscheduled Care Coordination Centre (UCCC), who draw calls from the West Midlands Ambulance Service (WMAS). The patients being attended generally have vulnerabilities associated with being at increased risk of fire such as elderly, mobility issues etc, therefore Safe and Well checks, including falls prevention advice are carried out.

The team consists of 6 staff (5 of which are also on-call personnel), based at Lichfield, working in shifts of 3 to cover 8am to 8pm, 7 days a week. When the team are not assigned to falls calls, they are carrying out prevention activity. As at the end of February 2025 over 2200 mobilisations have been made with these important interventions supporting the NHS and ensuring that members of the public are seen quickly following a fall, with an average arrival time of under 40 minutes, much quicker than waiting for an ambulance to arrive, allowing the ambulance teams to focus on more urgent calls. Funding has now been agreed that will extend this important work well into 2025.



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The Home from Hospital work (HfH) has been very successful with just under 2300 patients, as at February 2025, being transported from Hospital and taken home since 4 December 2023. This service provides a discharge and settle-in service for patients identified by the Integrated Discharge Hub (IDH) and is currently operating from various wards of the Royal Stoke Hospital. The team will attend the hospital on request and take a patient home and settle them in, ensuring they have access to all requirements to keep them safe, e.g. electricity, heat, food etc and will carry out safety checks including a Safe and Well check. The team also have the capability to transport patients in wheelchairs.

The Falls Response and HfH are both excellent examples of how the Service can add real value and support the communities we serve, but in different ways helping the local health economy to manage the increasing demands being placed upon the NHS.



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Wholetime Firefighter Productivity Update

The Service has a process in place to record the amount of time that operational staff are contributing towards the Operational, Enabling, and Non-Framework activities. Data is captured from operational staff directly, who are recording the type of daily activity and the time required to complete each activity manually within Service data management systems.

Guidance has been issued to operational crews through the 'Station Daily Work Routine' document, which also details the blocks of time within each shift (outside of meal breaks, standard routines and scheduled briefings) where activity recording is to take place.

Recording categories have been defined internally and are divided into the following areas for operational staff:

- **Operational Activities**
- **Training Activities**
- **Additional Routine Activities**
- **Prevent Activities**
- **Protect Activities**
- **Administrative Activities**

These categories are broadly similar to the guidance methodology detailed, however areas referred to as 'non-framework' activities such as; standard routines, meal and rest breaks are not included as these areas are already accounted for in Station daily work routines and do not form a part of reporting currently as crews are not required to record these types of activity.

Productivity Reporting

Reporting on Productivity is available to internal staff through SQL Server Reporting Services (SSRS), via web browser.

These reports provide information on a monthly basis with filters to allow the user to view data from a strategic level down to the activities recorded by an individual watch for each block defined by the 'Station Daily Work Routine' document.

A breakdown between business model (Wholetime / On Call) and Day/ Night shift patterns) is also possible from this report.

The below is a baseline of number of hours and percentage of shift spent (as recorded by Wholetime operational staff only) within each service delivery group. These figures together make up the overall Service total for hours committed to each activity category by Wholetime operational staff.



The below is based upon data for the annual period of 2023/24.

	Operational Activities		Training Activities		Additional Routine Activities		Prevent Activities		Protect Activities		Administrative Response Activities	
Reporting from 01/04/2023 - 31/03/2024	Hours	% of Shift Duration	Hours	% of Shift Duration	Hours	% of Shift Duration	Hours	% of Shift Duration	Hours	% of Shift Duration	Hours	% of Shift Duration
ESDG	1,823.70	16.40%	3,146.07	28.20%	1,167.25	10.50%	1,689.42	15.20%	494.73	4.40%	3,494.21	31.40%
NSDG	4,886.27	26.10%	6,019.03	32.10%	2,212.64	11.80%	3,114.35	16.60%	673.48	3.60%	6,875.61	36.70%
WSDG	1,914.33	25.20%	2,076.91	27.30%	1,037.46	13.60%	811.05	10.70%	319.56	4.20%	2,483.81	32.70%
Service Total	8,624.30	23.00%	11,242.01	30.00%	4,417.35	11.80%	5,614.82	15.00%	1,487.77	4.00%	12,853.63	34.30%

Outcome Based Data

Outcome based data is captured for wholetime firefighters which includes the following activities:

- Home Fire Safety Checks – The number of completed Home Fire safety checks for 2024/25 to date is 6,944, which is a 24% increase on the total number completed in 2022/23
- Site Specific risk information reports
- Hydrant Inspections – The number of hydrant inspections completed in 2024/25 is 468 to date which is 63% more than the previous year
- Community Initiatives and engagement

Capacity recording

A new capacity and Activity Calculator has been created by the Home Office. This will be completed by all crews during the first and last week of 2025/26 and reported within the Productivity and Efficiency Plan for 2025/26. This will support and build upon the data already being captured by the Service to demonstrate that the 3% increase in productivity is being achieved.



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Asset Management and IT Investment

To allow staff to work anywhere and still have full access to IT, the Service have provided all staff with access to the full set of Microsoft applications with appropriate security controls and also are in the process of delivering state of the art audio visual equipment to each fire station.

The access to applications, means that staff do not need to be tied to headquarters or stations to complete the majority of their work. They are able to work from home, the fireground or anywhere in between. The audio-visual equipment means that they can have immersive training or be active members of meetings from their own station.

The initiatives mean that training can take place remotely, reducing travel times. Staff can be more part of the decision-making process rather than feeling that decisions are made in an 'ivory tower'. It is simpler and easier to record staff hours and their productivity accurately as it can be done in real time. This project commenced in 2023 and will conclude in March 2026.

Digitisation of processes

The use of Microsoft PowerApps, PowerBI and Microsoft forms has been used to digitise numerous processes within the service. A new intranet has also meant that staff now know the correct location and application to use when completing work.

Staff now have the ability to complete forms or provide data in a single place, and then the processes are fully digitised, with streamlined workflows, potentially automated reducing manual tasks, and speeding up operations, leading to increased productivity.

Digital data can be accessed from anywhere at any time, making it easier for remote teams to collaborate and for individuals to access information. Digitized data can be easily analysed to gain insights, track trends, and make informed decisions.

The digitisation of processes has improved data quality, with the addition of validation at source, allowing more accurate reporting and actionable insight.



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Access to timely data and reports

The project has utilised PowerBI to enhance the ability to provide data sets and reports. Managers have the ability to build reports based on the datasets that are provided.

The project commenced in 2023 and will continue for the foreseeable future as there are numerous sources of data that can provide actionable insight.

Managers are now able to use the data sets to measure and monitor performance and compare and contrast between shifts, stations and divisions. This allows them to build actionable insights and review the success or otherwise of initiatives to improve productivity.

Managers can now see which areas need to be targeted for improvements.

Application rationalisation

Application rationalisation has involved evaluating and streamlining the number of software applications within our service to improve efficiency, reduce costs, and eliminate redundancy.

The Service over the years had purchased a number of spot solutions that provided a capability, but were not integrated with other applications, making data sharing difficult and having multiple sources of truth. By analysing the applications that we use and by replacing them with solutions that cover multiple areas, we have been able to reduce license costs, have clear demarcations of the master source of data, and allow simple integrations between fewer applications.

A simple example of an improvement is that the core operational water management solution, has a simple integration within the MDT solution, so that the state of hydrants is near real time and all users have an accurate up to date picture.

This project commenced in 2024 and will complete in 2026.



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Capital Expenditure

As well as ensuring that the revenue budget is affordable over the medium term, the Authority also needs to ensure money is available to purchase new assets (e.g. Premises, vehicles, equipment, ICT infrastructure). The planned capital programme is shown in the table below.

Estimated Capital Expenditure (All figures are £m unless stated)	2025 26 Budget	2026 27 Budget	2027 28 Budget
Capital Expenditure	5.8	4.1	3.4
Capital Expenditure Financing			
Direct revenue funding	0.5	0.4	0.5
Use of earmarked reserves	0.5		
Unsupported / Prudential borrowing	4.8	3.7	2.9

A three year Capital Programme and Capital Strategy has been approved for 2025/26 to 2027/28. The total programme of £5.8m for 2025/26 includes an element of carry-over from the current year. Whilst this delay has not impacted upon service delivery to date, it has culminated in a challenging but deliverable programme.

The Capital programme is supported in 2025-26 by the use of £0.5m of reserves, and £0.5m of direct revenue funding.

Performance Information

The Authority commits to the publication of transparent performance information. This includes but is not limited to:

- Annual Statement of Accounts, which incorporates the
- Annual Governance Statement
- A Statement of Assurance
- Information required by the prevailing Local Government Transparency Code
- The latest HMICFRS inspection report



Use of Reserves

Reserves are an essential part of good financial management. They allow authorities to manage unpredictable financial pressures and plan for their future spending. The level, purpose and planned use of reserves are important factors when developing medium-term financial Strategies and setting annual budgets. Reserves are held for three main purposes:

- a working balance to help cushion the impact of uneven cash flows and avoid unnecessary temporary borrowing – this forms part of general reserves
- a contingency to cushion the impact of unexpected events or emergencies – this also forms part of general reserves
- a means of building up funds (often referred to as earmarked reserves) to meet known or specific requirements

Within the existing statutory and regulatory framework, it is the responsibility of the Chief Finance Officer to advise the Staffordshire Commissioner about the level of reserves that it should hold and to ensure that there are clear protocols for their establishment and use. The projected balance of reserves for the period is shown in the following table, as per the approved Medium Term Financial Strategy:

RESERVES (£000)					
	2023 24	2024 25	2025 26	2026 27	2027 28
General reserves	1906	1906	1906	1906	1906
Earmarked revenue reserves of which MRP reserve	7057	6500	4700	3900	3600
Earmarked capital reserves					
Other reserves of which revenue of which capital	8586	8500	8000	8000	8000
TOTAL	17549	16906	14606	13806	13506

Progress of the Efficiency Pan

The Authority commits to publishing an annual Productivity and Efficiency Plan as required by the Home Office. This will be published following the annual budget setting process, and before the start of any new financial year. An update is provided to the Police Fire and Crime Panel as part of the MTFS refresh which is reviewed and scrutinised by the Panel usually in October / November annually.





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