



**DORSET & WILTSHIRE**  
**FIRE AND RESCUE**

# Productivity and Efficiency Plan

## 2025-26



PASSIONATE ABOUT

**CHANGING & SAVING LIVES**

## 1. Introduction

As part of the Spending Review 2021, the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) and the Local Government Association (LGA) agreed that between 2022/23-2024/25, fire and rescue services in England would increase wholetime firefighter productivity by 3% and create 2% of non-pay efficiency savings. The Spending Review 2024 included a re-commitment to these targets for 2025/26.

Linked to these targets, the production and publication of a Productivity and Efficiency Plan was requested by the Minister of State for Policing, Fire and Crime Prevention. Efficiency and productivity as an all-embracing leadership drive is fundamental to our approach to securing greater financial stability. This document sets our current financial position, historical approach and future plans to achieve efficiency and productivity gains.

## 2. Financial Outlook

The Authority's medium term financial plan was approved in February 2025, covering the period of 2025-26 to 2028-29.

The final Local Government Finance Settlement for 2025-26 was published on 3 February 2025. This was a further one-year settlement, the seventh in a row, but did include confirmation that 2026-27 will be a multi-year settlement.

There was an increase of £2.381m in our assessed core spending power to £74.864m. But £0.498m of this was the newly provided part-funded impact of the increase in employers' national insurance contributions. Excluding this, the year-on-year increase was 2.6%, with grant allocations increased in line with the rate of CPI in September 2024 which was 1.7%.

The settlement granted £5 precept flexibility for all fire and rescue authorities. This option was approved by the Authority and generated an additional £1.791m of standard Council Tax income in 2025-26 compared to assumptions built into previous financial forecasts.

However, the settlement confirmed the complete removal of three other grant income streams in 2025-26, the services grant, the rural service grant, and the funding guarantee grant. Previous forecast assumptions had been based on these continuing on a flat-rate basis; the Authority had received £1.791m in grant income from these in 2024-25.

Two of the four local authorities in Dorset and Wiltshire had approved the option of being able to introduce a 100% council tax premium on second homes in their

respective areas. This has generated an additional £0.814m of Council Tax income for the Authority in 2025-26.

The amendments to national insurance contribution arrangements announced by the Chancellor in October 2024 created a further unexpected budgetary pressure. Based on a 2% pay award, the estimated impact is additional costs of £0.889m. As outlined above, the Authority has received £0.498m of funding for this. The true financial cost of this will be confirmed once pay awards for all staffing groups are confirmed nationally, with a pay award more than 2% creating a further burden.

The budget approved by the Authority in February 2025 showed a balanced position for 2025-26, but a growing deficit in future financial years. This position is based on a number of assumptions including a core Council tax referendum threshold of 2.99% and pay awards and the Local Government Finance Settlement reflecting the Governments target inflation rate of 2%.

	2025-26 £m	2026-27 £m	2027-28 £m	2028-29 £m
Total funding	76.427	78.713	81.322	84.031
Estimated net service budget	76.427	80.093	82.833	85.795
<b>Budget surplus (+) / deficit (-)</b>	<b>0.000</b>	<b>-1.380</b>	<b>-1.511</b>	<b>-1.764</b>

Following the formal setting of the budget, the Home Office confirmed the final allocations of several further grants on 13 February 2025. Assumptions built into the budget setting process were based on these being maintained and reduced in some cases to reflect previous information issued. The final allocations confirmed were £0.334m lower than expected, with one grant completely removed. This position may improve slightly in the financial year, if further funding to support protection activity is allocated but this will not be confirmed until closer to the time.

Despite the positive increase in Council Tax income over £2.6m due to the additional precept flexibility and 100% council tax premium on second homes, the Authority is now only expecting to see a net funding increase of £0.088m compared to previous assumptions due to the reduction in grant income streams and the increase in national insurance contributions.

Where grant allocations have been maintained, they have been inflated in line with the CPI rate in September 2024 which was 1.7%. Inflation has since risen, with the latest figure in March 2025 being 2.6%, and is forecast to increase further as the year progresses. This will drive an increase in the price of goods and services across many of our areas. We have little scope to secure fixed prices with our suppliers, who often must pass on the cost associated with supply chain imbalances and the impact of national decisions, such as increases in national insurance contributions, and international issues, such as tariffs.

A higher inflationary environment will also influence pay negotiations for all of our staffing groups. The medium-term financial plan is based on pay awards of 2% per year, which reflects the Government inflation target and ultimately what the Authority can afford based on its income position. A pay award above this amount adds a further significant budget pressure, with each 1% equating to £0.500m in additional costs.

The Authority's budget setting papers were presented at the Fire Authority meeting on 6 February 2025 and are available [here](#).

Quarterly budget monitoring updates are presented to Finance and Audit Committee and are available [here](#).

### 3. Delivering Efficiency

Following the development of the 2024-2028 Community Risk Management Plan (our Community Safety Plan), the Service undertook a comprehensive and evidentially based fire cover review examining current and future risk and demand

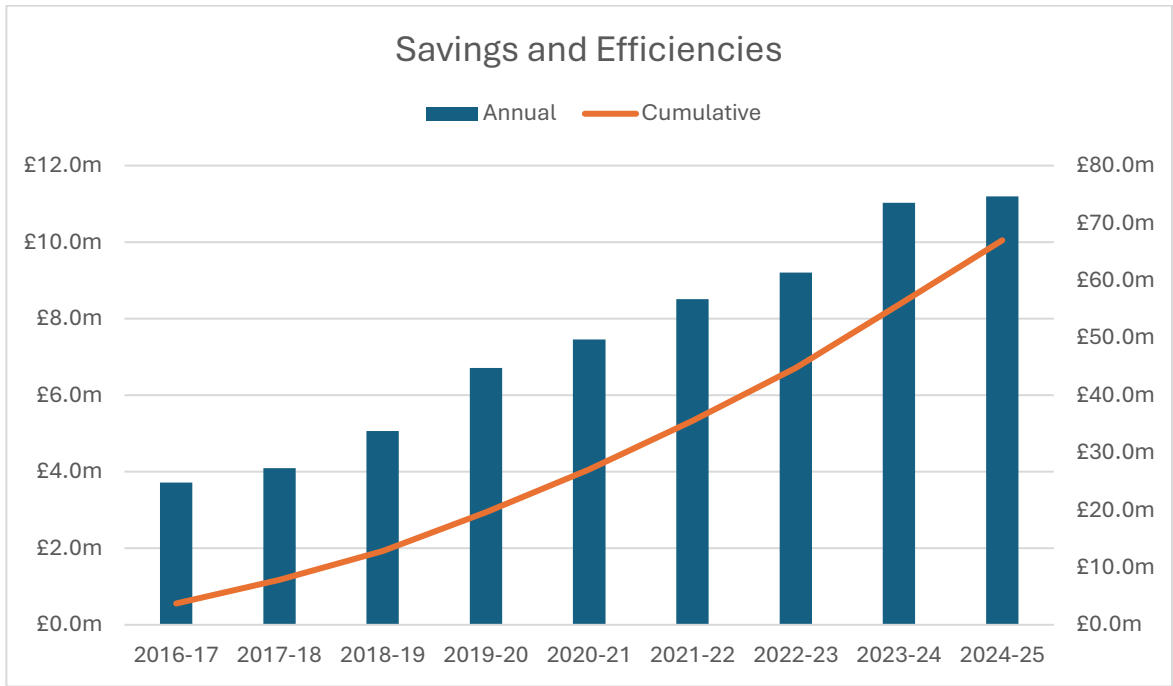
Having completed this review, which included full engagement with Members, we must now take further difficult decisions to maximise productivity and efficiency of the operational resources across the whole of the area in a financially viable and sustainable way. Some of this has meant re-design and cuts to frontline provision to achieve a balanced budget, with an overall objective of making an annual net revenue saving £2.5m per year.

This work led to the removal of the second appliance at four on-call stations and the removal of the third appliance at one wholetime station. This generated immediate annual savings of £1.382m and will lead to savings of £0.148m in cost avoidance. Additional changes were made to the duty systems at a further three wholetime stations, which led to a net investment of £0.621m. These changes are incorporated into the budget approved by the Authority for 2025/26 onwards.

Further work is ongoing, with Members reviewing future options assisted by Officers using the fire cover review. This work will deliver ongoing financial sustainability and provide further evidence of our strategic focus on delivering efficiencies and maximising the productivity of our staff.

The Authority has a proven track record of delivering annual efficiency savings. Indeed the Inspectorate have previously deemed the Service to have an 'Outstanding' rating for efficiency management. Since 1 April 2016 when the new Authority was established, annual cashable efficiencies of £11.2m had been realised by March 2025. This covered savings of £6.7m delivered by March 2020 aligned to our business case for combining the two legacy fire and rescue services and

authorities, £5.8m of which came from staffing changes. Additional savings of £4.5m were subsequently delivered between the 2020-21 and 2023-24 financial years.



Appendix A provides a breakdown of our revenue budget, income and efficiency data for the last two financial years and a forecast for 2025-26. Reserves data over an extended five year period is also provided.

The 2024-25 budget setting process, saw the finalisation of a 60% reduction in the prevention department resources, a cessation of all youth engagement programmes, changes to crewing arrangements and station-based trainer role amendments. Income budgets were also increased to reflect increased recovery in some departments alongside increased interest receipts from treasury activity.

During the financial year efficiencies were identified across several budgetary lines, reflective of reduced levels of activity and the introduction of smarter ways of working. These included fuel, training, equipment purchase, laundry, educational materials, smoke detectors, maintenance and repairs, cleaning and supplies and subscriptions.

As part of the Demand Management Group, the Service stopped attending automatic fire alarms (AFA's) at low-risk commercial premises in April 2024. This is a key change in relation to efficiency and productivity, with the change introduced to reduce the number of unwanted fire signals (false alarms) attended by our fire crews. During 2022/23, the Service attended 1,946 AFA's in commercial premises which turned out to be unwanted. The change is estimated to have generated a saving of £0.145m in 2024-25, which is reflected in 2025-26 budget allocations.

Contractual reviews have been undertaken for our on-call staff, supported by the use of technology, to support the provision of cover arrangements and maximizing appliance availability. Control measures have been implemented to manage the level of response required at any one time and the use of selective alerting to make the process as efficient as possible from a cost perspective.

Cost control measures have been implemented to minimise overtime, including the use of fixed term contracts to cover temporary vacancies which exceed three months. Standard rates of pay are lower than those incurred via overtime.

Wholetime watch managers have also been empowered to fully manage their crewing requirements. This enables local management of leave allocations across watches, including the provision of cover for training course attendance and the management of resources aligned to neighbouring stations to minimise overtime costs wherever possible.

The use of operational staff that are currently working day duties for roles such as training centre instructors has also been implemented. There is a requirement to ensure availability to ride appliances a minimum of one day per month. During 2024-25, this approach has led to 381 shifts being covered, which equates to a saving of approximately £0.118m.

A commissioning model for our on-call staff carrying out community engagement has also been implemented. Crews submit their attendance requests in advance and this is approved where the value of the attendance can be identified. The approval process also ensures strict control of the number of hours of attendance and the number of personnel authorised to attend.

Moving into 2025-26 several further areas are of focus to drive further opportunities for efficiency and productivity gains. These include changes to our pre-determined attendance levels, shift reviews and the usage of telematics on our vehicle fleet to monitor usage and capacity requirements. There are numerous initiatives and programmes in place to support our drive for greater efficiency and productivity.

Collaboration remains a key priority for the Authority. Active participation in national procurement processes is encouraged wherever possible, and our Procurement team look to influence and add value whenever there is opportunity.

The Networked Fire Services Partnership (NFSP) is an example of our commitment to collaboration, alongside our partners in Devon and Somerset, Hampshire and the Isle of Wight and Kent. The tender process for a replacement command and control system was completed in 2024-25. Prior to the tender process, likely costs across the whole partnership were estimated to be £7.5 million. The partnership arrangement has enabled significant savings to be generated from the tender process, with the total project costs expected to be £4.3m.

#### 4. Productivity

The productivity of our staff is also a key focus of the Authority. With 46 of our 50 stations being home to on-call appliances, productivity of these staff is directly linked to operational activity. Wholetime firefighter activities are measured in the following areas:

Watch based activities
Incidents attended
Safe and Well visits
Delivering Education
Risk Inspections
Business Fire Safety Checks
Delivery of Events

The wholetime watch based activities are recorded on an internal performance management system called 'How's My Team Doing' (HMTD). There are set hours for work with clear performance expectations and targets, and this is currently based at 40 hours per month. The rationale for 40 hours was agreed after the training hours, the personal fitness time and meal breaks, and station routines were deducted from the working shift, providing capacity to conduct watch-based activities.

There is an agreement with the rep bodies to extend the work capacity to complete essential activities and other administrative tasks where they have become outstanding between the hours of midnight and 1am.

Targets are set for these activities and these are outlined below:

Watch based activities	Set Targets
Incidents attended	<p>The response time is taken from the 999 call to an appliance booking mobile with 2 minutes</p> <p>Response standards: time of call to incidents the types are:</p> <p>10 Minutes (Sleeping Risk &amp; Other Buildings)</p> <p>13 Minutes (Sleeping Risk second appliance)</p> <p>15 Minutes (RTC and Other Buildings)</p>

	<p>All times are set between the response isochrones contained with the vision mobilisation system.</p> <p>We record the time the appliance is alerted to the time the appliance returns to station, to understand how long crews are spending at incidents each month. This forms part of the wider target which monitors how long our crews are spending out in the community each month. The overall 'Time spend in the community' target is 40 hours per month, 480 hours per year.</p>
Safe and Well visits	<p>The target is set on the completion before 56 days, failure to do will result in a red tile within the HMTD dashboard. A tiered approach prioritising visits identified as urgent has also been implemented. We record the travel time, inspection time and admin time associated with each visit, and monitor this monthly for each crew. This forms part of the wider target which monitors how long our crews are spending out in the community each month.</p>
Delivering Education	<p>The watch support both the education and prevention team in the delivery of activities aligned to the NFCC campaigns and ranked one schools. We record the travel time, inspection time and admin time associated with each visit, and monitor this monthly for each crew. This forms part of the wider target which monitors how long our crews are spending out in the community each month.</p>
Risk Inspections	<p>The risk work is split into two areas: a target for 7.2d familiarisation is a visit by firefighters to larger properties in their area to gather information about fire safety measures, firefighting equipment, and potential fire risks in buildings. Watches are required to undertake 20 visits per year. Watches are required to ensure that all Site Specific Risk Information (SSRI) are reviewed and completed within date, delays will result</p>



	<p>in HMTD dashboard to display a red tile against this target.</p> <p>We record the travel time, inspection time and admin time associated with each visit, and monitor this monthly for each crew. This forms part of the wider target which monitors how long our crews are spending out in the community each month.</p>
Business Fire Safety Checks	<p>All watches are trained to undertake Business Fire Safety Checks. Currently there is no set target but a reliance on professional judgement and the time for quality audits to be undertaken, although watches balance visits against the productivity reporting tool. We record the travel time, inspection time and admin time associated with each visit, and monitor this monthly for each crew. This forms part of the wider target which monitors how long our crews are spending out in the community each month.</p>
Delivery of Events	<p>There is no set target, although watches balance between operational incidents and other activities. We record the travel time, inspection time and admin time associated with each visit, and monitor this monthly for each crew. This forms part of the wider target which monitors how long our crews are spending out in the community each month.</p>

Performance is actively monitored in these areas and used internally to drive further improvement and areas of focus. Wholetime activity numbers are outlined below:

Watch based activities	<b>22/23</b>	<b>23/24</b>	<b>24/25</b>
Incidents attended	8686	8808	7820
Safe and Well visits	5736	4253	3774
Delivering Education	416	754	655
Risk Inspections	407	687	917
Business Fire Safety Checks	777	734	746
Delivery of Events	360	152	343

The Service uses a range of different systems that report directly into HMTD, for example CFRMIS and the Vision Mobilisation System provide live information to inform managers and watches of their performance overview, for continual monitoring to address shortfalls within the current working month. Further analysis of the outcome is also maintained and recorded.

Watch based activities	Assess the Quality and Activity
Incidents attended	The response times for every mobilisation is assessed against the required standard, scrutiny of the overall performance is conducted quarterly at the local performance and scrutiny boards chaired by the Fire Authority and the outcomes shared publicly.
Incident Recording System (IRS)	Every incident is recorded, and the completion rates are reported on. IRS performance is display on HMTD, any incident that fails the completion rates will be displayed on HMTD in red. District Commanders measure the quality of completion through HMTD and provide commentary on any issues.
Safe and Well visits	There is an audit process in place to review the delivery of safe and well visits and areas for improvement. Watch Managers will conduct audits on each Watch every 12 months. The Safe and Well Advisors complete desktop Audit's on Data Collection for Safe & Well Visits. Prevention Administrators audit each Wholetime and Day Crewed station every 24 months.
Delivering Education	This area of work is being further developed with a plan to boost online provision and content.
Risk Inspections	All completed risk inspection activities are recorded through CFRMIS, from completion to publication there are three levels of auditing.
Business Fire Safety Checks	Quality assurance is in place for BFSC's for crews in the way of Audits. Crews will be appraised on the key competencies for completion of the BFSCs. Crews are reviewed delivering BFSC's by an IQA assessor.

	Monthly reports are distributed on the BSAs through performance management reporting. There is protection dashboard that can also be used in conjunction with these reports.
Delivery of Events	Cultural Guides and Station Risk profiles are used to determine the events that will be attended by Watches. Organisational learning is fed through to the Culture development committee chaired by the Chief Fire Officer.
Themed Audits	The Service conducts a range of internal and external audits aligned to ISO 45000:1 standard and ISO 55001. Every station will be visited over a three-year period by an external auditor. Internal audits are conducted online with the services internal safety management systems.

The Service is constantly reviewing its approach and looking at ways to enhance this. The Fire Cover review has been the backbone for the Resourcing and Savings Programme work.

Workforce capacity is also actively monitored and assessed. There is a requirement for all wholtime watch-based staff to record productivity and capacity through HMTD. The reporting systems displays Red – Amber – Green tiles and is a record of the time crews spend out in the community each month, either at incidents, completing safe and well visits, delivering education, risk inspections, business fire safety checks, or delivering events. We monitor these figures monthly and increase targets accordingly as technology and process / policy improvements give our crews extra capacity to spend even more time on these activities.

The robustness of the data is assured via validation checks contained in the recording systems that prevent excessive time being recorded. Regular audits are undertaken to ensure the time recorded aligns with the activity count. Reviews are graded Red, Amber, Green, to highlight stations/crews that may need extra support/understanding to ensure the information is being recorded accurately. The Watch Activity page also has a gauge, so it's clear to see any crews that haven't recorded sufficient hours or have potentially recorded hours excessively.

The process of measuring capacity has driven increases in productivity levels. The watch activity page provides an easy visual to understand the productivity of each of our crews and ensures that their time is maximised. For example, over a typical summer period, some of our crews could attend protracted heath fires and most of

their 'time spent out in the community' target could be taken up by attending incidents, so the other activities will be reduced as a result. However, if there is less demand operationally, they will need to ensure they have undertaken the appropriate number of Safe and Well visits, or Business Fire Safety Check for example, to ensure they still achieve their productivity target. Our approach allows for monthly flexibility and considers the 'unknown' nature of an emergency response role.

Improvements in efficiency in some areas can then lead to direct impact on other areas. For example, the AFA attendance policy amendment in April 2024 reduced our attendance at non-sleeping commercial AFA's. Crew incident times each month have therefore reduced, driving growth in the provision of activities in other areas to ensure that their productivity target is still achieved. The workload of watch-based staff and their productivity automatically and dynamically adjust as we become more efficient.

## Appendix A

<b>BUDGET (£000)</b>			
<b>Revenue Expenditure</b>	<b>2023-2024</b>	<b>2024-2025</b>	<b>2025-2026</b>
Direct Employee	50,854	56,548	59,513
Indirect Employee	3,095	3,124	3,090
Premises	4,354	4,701	4,584
Transport	1,627	1,445	1,506
Supplies and Services	5,839	5,826	5,928
Capital Financing	4,206	5,571	5,706
Other	2,798	2,650	2,773
<b>Total</b>	<b>72,773</b>	<b>79,865</b>	<b>83,100</b>
<b>Income</b>	<b>2023-2024</b>	<b>2024-2025</b>	<b>2025-2026</b>
Actual Received from Precept	48,349	50,005	54,364
Local Government Finance Settlement	17,098	22,680	21,764
Other Grants	5,237	4,515	4,812
Income Raised Locally	2,089	2,665	2,160
<b>Total</b>	<b>72,773</b>	<b>79,865</b>	<b>83,100</b>

## INCOME

<b>£000</b>						
	<b>Actual 2023-24</b>		<b>Actual 2024-25</b>		<b>Forecast 2025-26</b>	
	<b>Recurrent</b>	<b>Non-recurrent</b>	<b>Recurrent</b>	<b>Non-recurrent</b>	<b>Recurrent</b>	<b>Non-recurrent</b>
Income generated from charging policies	541		755		566	
Income generated from trading operations	355		147		104	
Income generated from shared premises	164		159		165	
Income generated from interest on investments	330		690		400	
Income generated from other sources	699		915		925	
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,089</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>2,665</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>2,160</b>	<b>0</b>

<b>RESERVES (£000)</b>					
	<b>2023-2024</b>	<b>2024-2025</b>	<b>2025-2026</b>	<b>2026-2027</b>	<b>2027-2028</b>
General Reserves	3,102	3,157	3,212	3,272	3,332
Earmarked Revenue Reserves	5,555	5,188	4,181	2,985	2,482
of which MRP reserve	0	0	0	0	0
Earmarked Capital Reserves	10,209	14,000	12,000	3,000	0
Other Reserves					
of which revenue	2,048	745	374	174	0
of which capital	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>20,914</b>	<b>23,090</b>	<b>19,767</b>	<b>9,431</b>	<b>5,814</b>

## EFFICIENCY DATA (£000)

	Actual 2023-24						Actual 2024-25		Forecast 2025-26	
Opening Revenue Expenditure Budget (Net)	65,991		73,919		76,427					
Less Total Direct Employee Costs	53,850		60,133		62,382					
Non Pay Budget	12,141		13,786		14,045					
Efficiency Target (2% of non-pay budget)	242.82		275.72		280.9					
Efficiency Savings	Recurrent	Non-recurrent	Recurrent	Non-recurrent	Recurrent	Non-recurrent				
Direct Employee										
Reduction in Prevention/Protection/Response Staff	1,954		165		383					
Reduction in Support Staff					38					
Indirect Employee (e.g. training, travel etc.)										
All Indirect Employee Costs			14		212					
Premises										
Utilities					50					
Rent/Rates										
Other Premises Costs										
Shared Premises					18					
Transport										
Fleet					41					
Fuel					64					
Other Transport Costs										
Supplies and Services										
National Procurement Savings										
Local Procurement Savings										
Other Technology Improvements										
Decreased Usage	53				407					
Capital Financing										
Revenue Expenditure Charged to Capital										
Net Borrowing Costs	20				148					
Other										
Other Savings 1 (Please Specify)	52		50							
Other Savings 2 (Please Specify)										
Other Savings 3 (Please Specify)										
Total Efficiency Savings	2,079		229		1,361					
Efficiency Savings as a Percentage of Non-Payroll Budgets	856.19%		83.06%		484.51%					
Efficiency Savings Target	2.00%		2.00%		2.00%					
Over/(Under)	854.19%		81.06%		482.51%					