



DORSET & WILTSHIRE
FIRE AND RESCUE

Productivity and Efficiency Plan

2026-27



PASSIONATE ABOUT
CHANGING & SAVING LIVES

1. Introduction

The National Framework sets a requirement that Fire and Rescue Authorities (FRAs) produce and publish annual efficiency plans. There is a specific ask from the Minister for Building Safety, Fire and Democracy that in 2026/27, FRAs produce plans that cover their efficiencies and productivity initiatives in 2025/26, and their intentions for continuing efficiencies and productivity into 2026/27 and onwards.

Productivity and Efficiency plans help the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC), the Local Government Association (LGA) and the Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government (MHCLG) to collate evidence for future Spending Reviews, assess progress, and champion national improvement by identifying and sharing best practice.

Dorset & Wiltshire Fire and Rescue Service (DWFRS) maintains productivity and efficiency through a strategic focus on collaboration, digital transformation and targeted risk reduction. This includes the desire to maximise process optimization, wider workforce development and data-driven decision making.

This document sets our current financial position, historical approach and future plans to achieve efficiency and productivity gains to further enhance our position as a service that can demonstrate a strong history of financial management.

2. Financial Context

The Local Government Finance Settlement (LGFS) for 2026-27 detailing our assessed Core Spending Power (CSP) was announced on 9 February 2026. The settlement marked the first multi-year deal in a decade, although final funding allocations for 2027-28 and 2028-29 will be consulted on and confirmed in their respective years. The Government plans to complete another Spending Review before the end of this multi-year settlement, which may impact allocations for 2028-29 and which will determine arrangements for 2029-30 and beyond.

The breakdown of the assessed CSP for the multi-year settlement period is shown below:

Table 1 – Assessed CSP	2026-27 £m	2027-28 £m	2028-29 £m
Council Tax Requirement (CTR)	57.746	61.677	65.719
<i>Fair Funding Assessment:</i>			
- Revenue Support Grant (RSG)	12.758	11.553	10.268
- Baseline Funding Level (BFL)	8.974	9.180	9.365
Core Spending Power (CSP)	79.478	82.410	85.352

The initial analysis of the settlement provided a relatively positive position – an increase of 4.06% for 2026-27 and an increase of 11.76% over the three-year period. However, only the RSG allocation is formally set by central Government. The BFL reflects an assumed level of business rates income that is confirmed and collected locally. Similarly, the level of Council tax income collected via local precepting arrangements is also outside of the direct control of the Government.

The settlement confirmed the option for ongoing precept flexibility of £5 per year over the multi-year period. The assessed CSP assumes that this approach is approved by the Fire Authority for each respective year and that the underlying tax base (the number of Band D equivalent households in the Authority area) grows by 1.57% per year.

The Fire Authority are formally required to approve the budget for the Service prior to the financial year commencing. This must reflect the position confirmed locally for Council tax and business rates income rather than Government estimates. The breakdown of the actual and projected CSP based on local data, which formed part of the budget approved in February 2026, is shown below:

Table 2 – Actual CSP	2026-27 £m	2027-28 £m	2028-29 £m
Council Tax Requirement (CTR)	57.389	60.892	64.453
<i>Fair Funding Assessment:</i>			
- Revenue Support Grant (RSG)	12.758	11.553	10.268
- Baseline Funding Level (BFL)	8.959	9.180	9.365
Core Spending Power (CSP)	79.106	81.624	84.086

Actual Council tax base growth for 2026-27 is 0.94%. This has resulted in the Service being able to generate £0.357m less income than the Government believes it could in 2026-27.

Based on the tax base growth of 0.94% in 2026-27 and the historical standard tax base growth of 0.81% in 2025-26 and 0.84% in 2024-25, the budget approved by the Fire Authority included estimated tax base growth of 0.90% per year in 2027-28 and 2028-29. This will mean that by 2028-29 actual Council tax income received by the Service will be £1.266m lower than the Government believes it can generate.

The content of the LGFS and the impact it has on the overall resources the Services has to operate is a fundamental factor in the wider medium-term financial plan (MTFP). The Authority has a statutory responsibility to achieve a balanced revenue budget position for each respective year, but the MTFP forecasts a significant budget deficit in 2026-27 which will continue to increase slowly over the following two financial years.

Table 3 Budget Deficit	2026-27 £m	2027-28 £m	2028-29 £m
Total funding	79.503	82.045	84.506
Estimated net service budget	80.710	83.515	86.211
Budget surplus (+)/deficit (-)	-1.207	-1.470	-1.705

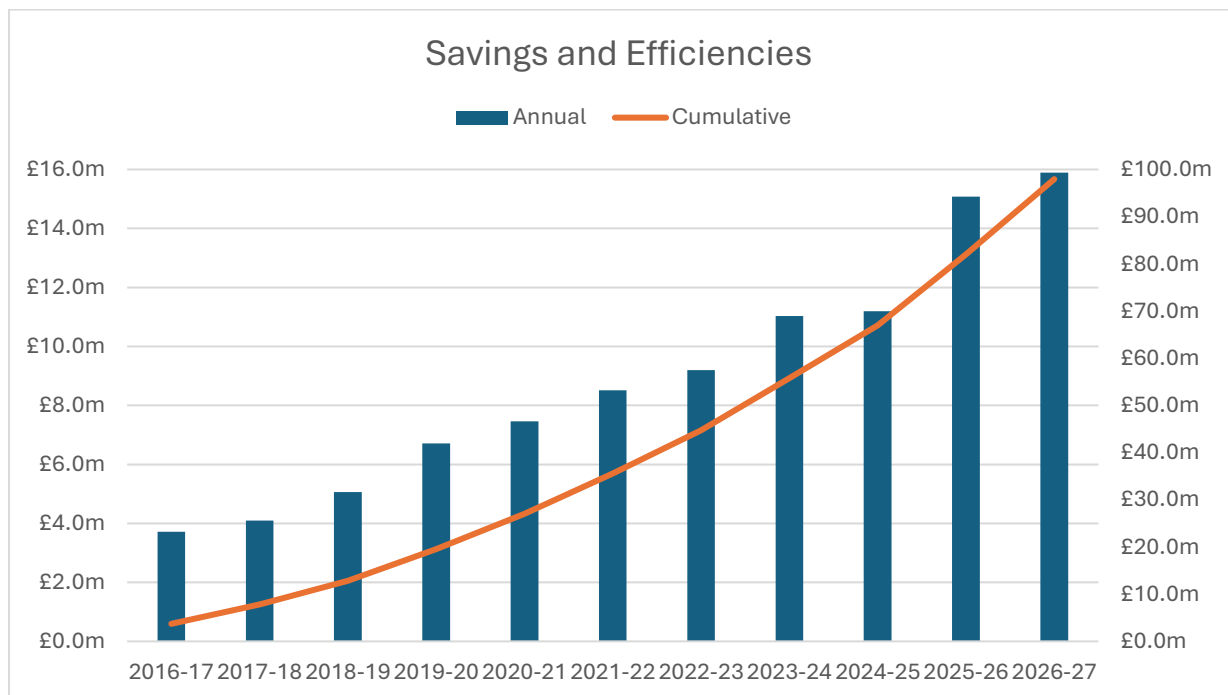
Due to the financial position outlined, the Fire Authority approved a period of public consultation to consider the possible closure of up to eight fire stations across Dorset & Wiltshire. This period commenced in February 2026 and will last for thirteen weeks. It is expected that a decision will be made by the Fire Authority at its meeting on 30 June 2026.

The Authority’s budget setting papers were presented at the Fire Authority meeting on 10 February 2026 and are available [here](#).

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

3. Delivering efficiencies

DWFRS has delivered significant and sustained reform over recent years, achieving over £15m of recurring savings since combination in 2016, while continuing to improve operational effectiveness and outcomes for the communities it serves. The Service has demonstrated a clear ability to modernise, innovate and deliver value for money, operating as one of the most efficient fire and rescue services in the country.



The ten-year period since the Service was formed has seen significant levels of change in the Sector. Whilst the challenge to deliver financial sustainability has remained, the need to ensure the allocation of operational resources reflects risk and demand is fundamental. The Service has used an evidence-based approach to assess this, with over 67,000 actual incidents analysed in our Fire Cover Review. This has identified the need to invest as well as generate efficiencies, with over £2.2m re-invested in wholetime firefighter resources since April 2023.

During the budget setting process for 2026-27, £0.518m of efficiencies were identified from non-staffing budgets across several non-station-based teams. The Local Government Pension Scheme employer contribution rate was also reduced as part of the latest triennial valuation, with an estimated saving of £0.291m generated.

The Service has introduced an internal Compliance and Investigation team to specifically focus on factors which underpin operational efficiency. This team has mandated and monitored the introduction of the use of nine day fortnight staff to support crewing shortfalls, delivered £69k of revenue cost reductions from the review of other duties claims by on-call staff and led the review of 'follow on' on-call incident claims. This work has led to a 90% reduction in incorrect claims, driving further efficiencies.

Appendix A provides a breakdown of our revenue budget, reserves, income and efficiency data for the last two financial years and a forecast for the next three financial years.

4. Productivity gains

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
Home Fire Safety Checks
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. When the system was originally implemented, a target of 40 hours per month was agreed. This was after training hours, personal fitness time, meal breaks, and station routines were deducted from the working shift, providing capacity to conduct watch-based

activities. Now the system is fully established across the Service, this target has been increased to 42-46 hours per month, demonstrating the focus on driving performance and productivity across our stations.

There is an agreement with the representative 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.

An example of a HMTD dashboard is shown below:



Targets are set for the specific watch-based 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> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 10 Minutes (Sleeping Risk & Other Buildings) 13 Minutes (Sleeping Risk second appliance)

	<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.</p>
Home Fire Safety Checks	<p>A tiered approach prioritising visits identified as urgent has been implemented, with performance displayed on the HMTD dashboard. 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>Each respective watch support both the education and prevention team in the delivery of activities aligned to the NFCC campaigns and ranked one schools.</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>
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 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,</p>

	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.
Delivery of Events	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.

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

<u>Watch based activities</u>	22/23	23/24	24/25	25/26
Incidents attended	8,686	8,808	7,820	9,165
Home Fire Safety Checks	5,736	4,253	3,774	3,949
Delivering Education	416	754	655	566
Risk Inspections	407	687	917	903
Business Fire Safety Checks	777	734	746	692
Delivery of Events	360	152	343	413

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.
Home Fire Safety Checks	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 and 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 of the Resourcing and Savings Programme work to date, providing the required evidence to drive decisions.

Workforce capacity is also actively monitored and assessed. There is a requirement for all wholetime 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 delivering the activities outlined above.

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 Home Fire Safety Checks 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 Automatic Fire Alarm (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.

The Service continues to look for opportunities to either reduce costs or boost productivity by looking at underlying processes and reasons for activities being completed. A recent exercise reviewing the standard historical attendance of an Area Manager at external meetings across Dorset & Wiltshire identified that this cost the Service more than £15k per year. Productivity is a focus across the whole Service, and opportunities to maximise it are actively pursued.

5. Next steps

The Service has recently developed a Service Modernisation Programme 2026-2029 representing the next phase of structured transformation that will be undertaken by the Service, building on the successful delivery of the previous programmes. It provides a comprehensive and disciplined framework to deliver further efficiencies, strengthen resilience, and support long-term financial sustainability, while continuing to improve how the Service protects its communities.

Central to this programme is a balanced approach that aligns financial sustainability with service effectiveness. This is not a single initiative, but an ongoing and deliberate process, requiring careful prioritisation, innovation, and strong organisational commitment. It will be delivered in a way that supports our people, strengthens organisational culture, and ensures that prevention, protection and response capabilities remain resilient and adaptable to future risks.

Through disciplined implementation and ongoing review, this programme will act as a cornerstone document, alongside our Community Safety Plan, guiding the Service through a period of financial constraint while continuing its transition to a more efficient, effective and future-ready fire and rescue service.

Appendix A

BUDGET (£000)					
Revenue Expenditure	2024-2025	2025-2026	2026-2027	2027-2028	2028-2029
Direct Employee	56548	59513	62747	64949	67235
Indirect Employee	3124	3090	3285	3351	3418
Premises	4701	4584	4880	4977	5077
Transport	1445	1506	1572	1603	1635
Supplies and Services	5826	5928	5879	5996	6116
Capital Financing	5571	5706	6113	6371	6532
Other	2650	2773	2513	2476	2437
Total	79865	83100	86989	89723	92450
Income	2024-2025	2025-2026	2026-2027	2027-2028	2028-2029
Actual Received from Precept	50005	54364	57389	60892	64453
Local Government Finance Settlement	22680	21764	21717	20733	19633
Other Grants	4515	4812	4192	4092	4092
Income Raised Locally	2665	2160	2484	2536	2567
Total	79865	83100	85782	88253	90745

RESERVES (£000)					
	2024-2025	2025-2026	2026-2027	2027-2028	2028-2029
General Reserves	3157	3212	3267	3327	3392
Earmarked Revenue Reserves	5125	4494	3850	3487	3124
of which MRP reserve	0	0	0	0	0
Earmarked Capital Reserves	14000	14000	4500	0	0
Other Reserves					
of which revenue	745	633	533	433	333
of which capital	0	0	0	0	0
Total	23027	22339	12150	7247	6849

INCOME (£000)

	Actual 2024-25		Actual 2025-26		Forecast 2026-27		Forecast 2027-28		Forecast 2028-29	
	Recurrent	Non-recurrent	Recurrent	Non-recurrent	Recurrent	Non-recurrent	Recurrent	Non-recurrent	Recurrent	Non-recurrent
Income generated from charging policies	755		566		551		562		573	
Income generated from trading operations	147		104		324		330		337	
Income generated from shared premises	159		165		153		156		159	
Income generated from interest on investments	690		400		400		400		400	
Income generated from other sources	915		925		1056		1088		1098	
Total	2666	0	2160	0	2484	0	2536	0	2567	0

EFFICIENCY DATA (£000)

Dorset and Wiltshire										
	Actual 2024-25		Actual 2025-26		Forecast 2026-27		Forecast 2027-28		Forecast 2028-29	
	Recurrent	Non-recurrent	Recurrent	Non-recurrent	Recurrent	Non-recurrent	Recurrent	Non-recurrent	Recurrent	Non-recurrent
Opening Revenue Expenditure Budget (Net)	73,919		76427		79503		82045		84506	
Less Total Direct Employee Costs	56,548		59513		62747		64949		67235	
Non Pay Budget	17,371		16914		16756		17096		17271	
Efficiency Savings	Recurrent	Non-recurrent	Recurrent	Non-recurrent	Recurrent	Non-recurrent	Recurrent	Non-recurrent	Recurrent	Non-recurrent

<u>Direct Employee</u>									
Reduction in Prevention/Protection/Response Staff	165	-	383		1207				
Reduction in Support Staff	-	-	38						
<u>Indirect Employee (e.g. training, travel etc.)</u>									
All Indirect Employee Costs	14	0	212		4				
<u>Premises</u>									
Utilities	0	0	50						
Rent/Rates	0	0							
Other Premises Costs	0	0			90				
Shared Premises	0	0	18						
<u>Transport</u>									
Fleet	0	0	41						
Fuel	0	0	64						
Other Transport Costs	0	0			15				
<u>Supplies and Services</u>									
National Procurement Savings	0	0							
Local Procurement Savings	0	0							
Other Technology Improvements	0	0			106				
Decreased Usage	0	0	407		303		263		235
<u>Capital Financing</u>									
Revenue Expenditure Charged to Capital	0	0							
Net Borrowing Costs	0	0	148						
<u>Other</u>									
Other Savings 1 (Please Specify)	50	0							
Other Savings 2 (Please Specify)	0	0							

Other Savings 3 (Please Specify)	0	0				
Total Efficiency Savings (excluding direct employee savings)	64	940	518	263	235	
Efficiency Savings as a Percentage of Non-Payroll Budgets	0.37%	5.56%	3.09%	1.54%	1.36%	